

BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

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JOINT APPLICATION OF WISCONSIN ELECTRIC) Docket No.
POWER COMPANY AND WISCONSIN GAS LLC FOR)
AUTHORITY TO ADJUST ELECTRIC, NATURAL) 5-UR-110
GAS, AND STEAM RATES)
- - - - -

EXAMINER MICHAEL NEWMARK, PRESIDING

Tr. 384-577

PUBLIC HEARING SESSIONS

2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

**CERTIFIED
ORIGINAL**

Reported By:

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HEARING HELD:

November 3, 2022

WASHINGTON PARK SENIOR CENTER
4420 WEST VLIET STREET
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

CHAIRPERSON REBECCA CAMERON VALCQ
COMMISSIONER TYLER HUEBNER

1 JUNE KOZAK KANE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. KOZAK KANE: Could you all hear me?
4 How about in the back? Can you raise your hand
5 if you can hear me?

6 Okay. As we all know, We Energies
7 is not a typical utility which would be, if it
8 were, a nonprofit solely dedicated to providing
9 the best and cheapest energy for its customers.

10 Instead, We Energies is a
11 for-profit company beholden to its shareholders.
12 I don't know how this happened, but it did. And
13 now I think we all need to find a way to create a
14 company, even if we have to change it, that would
15 satisfy all parties. If they still need to have
16 shareholders, fine, but they also have to satisfy
17 those who use their energy.

18 I believe that energy sourcing may
19 be one key to doing this. In the nearly 40 years
20 that I am aware of, We Energies has not done even
21 one energy test within the City of Milwaukee.
22 When I attended an energy conference at UWM, I
23 learned that there were a few, like I mean five,
24 tiny studies on wind and solar alternatives that
25 were done in small suburbs and in an area in the

1 upper peninsula of Michigan.

2 I personally live in a cooperative
3 building on Prospect Avenue. We are high up on
4 the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. We have
5 unobstructed sun from dawn till dusk each day.
6 Our building is also in a wind tunnel, which we
7 don't love, but it's the truth. It's in a wind
8 tunnel.

9 Ten years ago, I asked We Energies
10 if it would like to use our building to affix
11 many tiny wind turbines, each the size of
12 birdhouses, but which would be spinning and would
13 really produce a lot of energy; and we would
14 attach them along a very strong metal fence that
15 we have, a steel fence, very thick steel fence
16 around our rooftop. We could have solar panels
17 on our entire east side of the building and even
18 on the south side of the building.

19 We were told that they were not
20 interested. What does this tell us? In my
21 humble opinion, I think the legislature needs
22 to place some controls on We Energies and
23 demands, and they need to demand that all future
24 rate hikes should, instead, be in the form of
25 energy gained from solar, wind or water wave

1 energies from experimental programs that they can
2 set up with rebates and incentives from the
3 government.

4 If you -- I have one other thing
5 that I would like to add if you don't mind.

6 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Go ahead.

7 MS. KOZAK KANE: I spoke to an expert,
8 a financial expert, that I consulted about this;
9 and he said, If you really want to effect change,
10 talk to your state politicians. Since

11 We Energies is a private, for-profit company and
12 not a public utility, they own the power lines.

13 Wisconsin must have given up the
14 rights and regulations to that at some point. We
15 might want to look into that. The only way to
16 cap these rate increases on energy, especially
17 for low-income folks, would be to enact some sort
18 of regulation or law at the state or other
19 governmental level and see if the state
20 legislature can decide to allocate some portion
21 of funds for reimbursement or credit on state or
22 other tax returns or something like that for
23 those who qualify under certain low-income
24 levels.

25 More alternatives, more

1 alternative energy experimentation and systems,
2 and they would save more than enough so that
3 there would not have to be any rate increases.
4 That is what I hope to see for the future; and if
5 not, I think the company should be disbanded and
6 should be turned into a true utility.

7 Thank you very much.

8 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thank
9 you.

10 Karen Ingvaldsstad.

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1 KAREN INGOLDSTAD, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. INGOLDSTAD: Good afternoon. My
4 name is Karen Ingoldstad. If you can't hear me,
5 please raise your hand, and I'll try -- oh, whoa.

6 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Yeah, a little
7 louder.

8 MS. INGOLDSTAD: Is that better?
9 Good.

10 I just want to begin by saying I
11 do not support We Energies' rates and the cost of
12 our utilities' rates and use. First, during the
13 economic decline, people have less money to pay
14 for a higher bill, a 13 percent higher bill to be
15 exact.

16 We Energies will ask consumers to
17 donate to help defray the cost when families
18 can't pay. It would seem to benefit all
19 concerned not to raise prices so cash flow is
20 available for folks to pay their bills.

21 If citizens have their own
22 resources to pay their bill, it will enhance the
23 feeling of well-being. This, in turn, may lead
24 to less stress and a healthier community. That's
25 what we need, is a healthier community. We are

1 not the only country, city, state experiencing
2 economic hardship. This too will pass.

3 We Energies receives a monthly
4 statement -- or payment from individuals,
5 businesses, farms, nonprofits and anyone who uses
6 electricity and gas to function in their homes
7 and wherever they work. Not all businesses can
8 count on that kind of economic security.

9 While this increase does not
10 affect businesses, just the public, the lack of
11 funds to small businesses -- excuse me. The lack
12 of funds small businesses -- I have to reread
13 that.

14 EXAMINER NEWMARK: That's all right.
15 Take your time.

16 MS. INGVOLDSTAD: While this increase
17 does not affect businesses, just the public, the
18 lack of funds to small businesses will happen
19 because people will not have enough expendable
20 cash.

21 I called my financial advisor also
22 to ask if We Energies is in financial distress.
23 He did not indicate that they were, even though
24 their corporation is not losing money, even
25 though the current stock price may be down a

1 bit.

2 The company should consider not
3 giving a raise to executive officers and those on
4 the board until the economic outlook improves. I
5 read those pages regarding how much board members
6 are paid in stock and dollars. It's an
7 extraordinary amount of money compared with what
8 the average worker's salary is in the United
9 States. My history in the workforce has been as
10 a registered nurse and as a chaplain for hospice.
11 My salary's never looked like theirs, never, not
12 even close.

13 We Energies will be receiving
14 millions of dollars from the Federal Government
15 for infrastructure and to pursue environmental
16 options for energy for several years with the
17 Biden plan recently passed in Congress.

18 Investors need to balance the
19 value of their investments over -- against the
20 value of the health and community. We are all
21 saving for retirement, but it should not be at
22 the expense of folks on fixed incomes and lower
23 income. That includes the working poor, those on
24 SSI, retired folks, and those who are just less
25 fortunate than we are.

1 The community will end up paying
2 for these higher rates; the families cannot. So
3 why not come up with a plan that works. June
4 just gave us some great ideas to work on. And I
5 can tell that the Commission has already began to
6 investigate and look into why the energy company
7 is asking for this raise. They explained that to
8 us in the beginning of this program. So I was
9 glad to hear that.

10 Electric bills never go down; they
11 just go up, at least in my history. We Energies
12 needs to be patient, consider their customers
13 first, thus helping the community. Times will
14 improve. Let's have a win-win situation. Thank
15 you.

16 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you, Karen.

17 So just to reiterate, our court
18 reporter is really trying to listen hard to what
19 people are saying so that this comment, this
20 person's comment, can get to the Commission. So
21 any distractions are going to make that work
22 difficult for her.

23 Also, she just asked me if we can
24 keep the chair facing her so she can see the
25 person talking. So I don't want to -- we have to

1 come to a middle ground here. So we can put the
2 chair sort of at an angle so you can kind of face
3 the audience and face her, but the idea is we
4 want to make sure that the court reporter can get
5 what you're saying down. That's our primary goal
6 here. So keep that in mind, please.

7 Let me start with our next,
8 LaShonda Harvey.

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1 LASHONDA HARVEY, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. HARVEY: I'm with Metcalfe Bridges.

4 I'm also a resident of the 15th district. I'm a
5 mother of three. I've been living there for
6 almost three years, and this is -- the raise, I
7 do not agree with. The increase, I do not agree
8 with.

9 I have three young children in
10 this community. My income has changed
11 drastically. We have to think about the young
12 parents out here who's trying to maintain going
13 through this COVID, losing jobs and everything.
14 I personally experienced a car accident.

15 And the payment plans, those help
16 how? How are they helping us when you picking
17 the amount that we have to pay instead of asking
18 us or going off our income? You're automatically
19 giving us an amount to pay, and what if we can't
20 pay that?

21 Again, I'm struggling on if I
22 should pay my We Energies, my rent, food or even
23 diapers for my young child. So to me, I'm not
24 understanding when you're not in debt at all.
25 How is this gonna affect us? Even the program,

1 if you're going to put us in a program and not
2 allow us to speak on what we can, if we can't
3 afford anything to pay? Like that's not helping
4 if you gonna do a payment plan, you want us to
5 pay \$600; and if we can't pay the \$600, we're
6 without lights.

7 I have asthma. My young children
8 have asthma; and by me being in that car
9 accident, I wasn't able to work, I wasn't able to
10 walk, I wasn't able to provide. I was stuck in
11 the hospital, and they cut my lights off because
12 I missed the appointment over the phone the day
13 after my accident. I wasn't able to speak.

14 Luckily, the hospital kept me
15 there because I had no lights to go home to, and
16 it was a Saturday, no one in the office. No one
17 was able to do any emergency. Y'all say y'all do
18 emergencies. Where is the emergency assistance
19 on Saturdays and Sundays and after hours that
20 you're trying to help these people in these
21 communities when you have no problem cutting us
22 off?

23 What if we can't afford the \$600.
24 What do we do then? What's the next step for
25 those who can't afford that? You have all these

1 programs. What are these programs doing for us?

2 Thank you.

3 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks
4 very much.

5 So I just want to point out, if
6 people could avoid coming from behind when they
7 come up because there's lots of wires back here,
8 and you could trip on those. So just when you're
9 coming up, come through the front.

10 Also, another reminder, we do have
11 another room on the other side of the building
12 for customer assistance if you have questions
13 about your bill. I believe there's some
14 low-income assistance program people there too.
15 Yeah. I'm getting a nod over there. So they can
16 help you sign up for that. And also the company,
17 the Applicant, should be there too, although I
18 didn't see them there myself. They should be
19 there to answer questions about specific things
20 you might have in your bill. Commission Staff is
21 there, too, in case you need their help. So this
22 is for the comments, and the other room is for
23 the questions.

24 All right. State Senator Chris
25 Larson is next.

1 CHRIS LARSON, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. LARSON: Thank you to the
4 Commissioners for coming out here. I understand
5 it's a bigger deal that you guys have made the
6 trip to be out here and hear from all of us in
7 person.

8 I am hearing with interest what my
9 neighbors are saying about their rates, and I'm
10 here to amplify that. There is little to no
11 justification for why We Energies should be
12 increasing their rates at a time where they are
13 decreasing the rates for industrial use.

14 Our residents already pay the
15 second highest rates of anybody in the Midwest;
16 and on top of that, it has resulted in
17 We Energies posting, I believe, a fifth straight
18 year of huge profits. Last year, that was a net
19 profit of \$1.3 billion. Instead of passing those
20 savings on to neighbors who are struggling to be
21 able just to have two nickels to rub together,
22 they are using their excess money to purchase a
23 power plant in another state to the price tag of
24 \$360 million that is going to service one Fortune
25 500 company.

1 So instead of that, I would hope
2 that we would return to the spirit of this
3 government-created monopoly which is to serve the
4 people. So that means lowering the rates and
5 forever taking into consideration the ability of
6 a person to pay.

7 That should not be above 6 percent
8 for any individual. It should not be a question
9 of whether they can afford to keep their home
10 heated, to keep their food cold in their
11 refrigerator and to be able to sleep well,
12 knowing that the lights will be able to turn on
13 in the morning or if they're gonna have to be
14 able to pay rent.

15 We have the ability to do that.
16 The PSC has the ability to do that by pushing
17 back on this and saying no to their attempted
18 rate increase.

19 I would add, the other thing that
20 we are asking for the PSC to do or for
21 We Energies to do is to reduce the guaranteed
22 return on investment to their shareholders from
23 10 percent to 9 percent or lower. This seems to
24 be the main driver, that they are more interested
25 in trying to be able to produce profit for their

1 shareholders than to be able to service those who
2 rely on electricity. So those are the big things
3 that I would add.

4 On top of that, that as energy
5 costs do go up for the cost of coal, oil and
6 natural gas, Wisconsin, as the Commissioners know
7 and others know, we do not produce within our
8 borders. The sooner we can encourage We Energies
9 to move towards renewable sources of energy, the
10 sooner we can make sure that we are energy
11 independent as a state and have more money
12 circulating within our economy instead of sending
13 billions of dollars out of state every single
14 year.

15 So with that, I'm hopeful we do
16 that, especially on a warm day like today, which
17 may be nice for some folks, but for folks like me
18 and folks like my nephew and others who have
19 asthma, it's not the greatest, right? And that
20 is only going to continue when, on another
21 subject, We Energies is delaying the retirement
22 of their coal-burning power plant.

23 So I hope that we would take those
24 things into consideration; and again, I thank the
25 Commissioners for your time, and I thank you for

1 being here at this public hearing to hear from my
2 neighbors.

3 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Brittany Taylor is
4 next.

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1 BRITTANY TAYLOR, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. TAYLOR: Hello. I am a Metcalfe
4 Park resident. I was sitting here listening to
5 how -- can you hear me, guys?

6 I'm a Metcalfe Park resident, and
7 I was sitting here listening to how we could go
8 in the next room and apply and get assistance
9 with paying those bills; and I remember this time
10 last year, I was giving birth to my son, who was
11 sick, and we had to be induced.

12 And after I pushed him out and
13 they laid him on my chest, my sister passed me
14 the phone from We Energies, calling for my
15 appointment, and I had to take it because they
16 were going to cut my lights off; and I still
17 didn't qualify for the assistance because I made
18 what they consider too much money.

19 Even though I live paycheck to
20 paycheck, even though I have to figure out how to
21 put food in my fridgerator. So what I have to --
22 I don't agree with their increase. And the
23 biggest problem with their increase is that a
24 company without competition is not kept in check.
25 When Walmart axed their food, we go to Target.

1 When Payless wasn't paying less, we went to --
2 anywhere else.

3 We Energies doesn't have
4 competition to keep them in check; and so
5 therefore, they are taking advantage of us. They
6 are gouging us, and they are benefiting off of
7 the poor people's back, while they bill their
8 interracial generational wealth for their
9 families and leave us to figure it out.

10 We don't qualify for those
11 programs; and when we do qualify, the hoops and
12 the cartons that you have to jump through to get
13 them are demeaning, and it's disrespectful, and
14 it makes you feel like a peasant. It makes you
15 feel like you're less than human, and you don't
16 deserve the energy, you don't deserve the lights.

17 You get off that phone feeling
18 like you don't deserve to even turn on your
19 lights. We are in our houses yelling at our
20 children, don't turn my heat on, don't turn my
21 lights on. I got a four-year-old who knows to
22 turn off the lights when we walk out the door,
23 and that just ain't a child growing up happy.

24 So We Energies, what I have to say
25 to you all is knock it off. Do better. And how

1 about you put some of that profit money in the
2 communities that you are gouging.

3 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

4 So I'm just going to read a couple
5 of names so that you know if you're on deck. So
6 the next person up is Melody McCortis, and then
7 we have James Buchen, B-u-c-h-e-n, and then Roger
8 Cole.

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1 MELODY MCCORTIS, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. McCORTIS: My name is Melody
4 McCortis. I live in Metcalfe Park. I work in
5 Metcalfe Park. I work up the street from one of
6 WE Energies' headquarters.

7 And it's amazing that I'm here
8 today fighting for our lives. Everybody said
9 some amazing things today. Y'all are the only
10 ones.

11 It's amazing to me that throughout
12 this pandemic, everyone who has not suffered
13 through this pandemic is trying to price gouge
14 us. It's poverty pimping off my community, off
15 my neighbors. It's ridiculous for y'all to ask
16 for an increase when everything in our life has
17 decreased.

18 Y'all have millions, if not
19 billions, to create some renewable energy, and
20 y'all have not. Y'all have millions to reinvest
21 into the communities that you have profited off
22 of, sent your kids to school off of, bought
23 houses off of, yachts, and all of that off of.

24 And my community is saying that we
25 are trying to figure out do we pay the lights or

1 do we pay the rent or should we have a house with
2 no light and heat. Can we survive a Wisconsin
3 winter without no heat. And y'all gonna cut it
4 off before it's the cutoff time. Y'all gonna
5 make sure y'all cut it off.

6 I live check to check too. What I
7 do, I do it because I gotta do it because of
8 institutions like this coming into my community
9 and robbing them every day. We should not have
10 to pay this much money to have quality of life.

11 There are landlords in our
12 community that are not held accountable for
13 putting energy-efficient windows in. We got
14 landlords slapping houses together, and they
15 ain't even got no insulation. So all the money
16 that we paying is going out the window.

17 Get it together, like Brittany
18 said. There is no reason I should be here.
19 Those programs shouldn't exist if it was
20 affordable, right? They affordable to who? Not
21 me and my community. Get it together.

22 EXAMINER NEWMARK: James Buchen, Roger
23 Cole and then Michael Komba.

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1 JAMES BUCHEN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. BUCHEN: Good afternoon, and thank
4 you for this opportunity to testify in support of
5 the settlement agreement in the Wisconsin Energy
6 Corporation's rate case, as well the proposed
7 10 percent return on equity for Wisconsin
8 Electric Power and the 10.2 percent return on
9 equity for Wisconsin gas.

10 My name is James Buchen, and I'm
11 the executive director of the Wisconsin Utility
12 Investors, Incorporated. WUI is a nonprofit
13 association of individuals that own stock in
14 Wisconsin's gas and electric utilities.

15 WUI's mission is to protect
16 shareholder interests in matters of public policy
17 and ratemaking that have an impact on their
18 investments. Most members are retirees of modest
19 means who rely on their utility stock dividends
20 to supplement Social Security and other income.
21 I'm appearing today on behalf of the nearly
22 50,000 individuals in Wisconsin that own shares
23 in gas and electric utilities operating in this
24 state.

25 The issue of rate of return on

1 equity is of critical importance to utility
2 shareholders. In this case, the companies are
3 not asking to increase their ROEs, but rather
4 maintain them at current levels. Any reduction
5 in ROE would likely reduce dividends paid to
6 shareholders of these companies, making them less
7 attractive investments relative to other
8 utilities in Wisconsin and around the country.

9 If shareholders ultimately
10 choose other investments, stock prices are
11 likely to drop with less equity capital
12 available to finance needed investment in new
13 renewable generation. The companies would be
14 forced to rely more heavily on increasingly
15 expensive debt.

16 Ultimately, ratepayers would have
17 to bear the burden of financing this debt at
18 today's higher interest rates. All things
19 considered, reducing ROEs is not likely to
20 benefit ratepayers.

21 The proposed ROEs in this case are
22 consistent with those recently approved by the
23 Commission for other Wisconsin utilities. It
24 does not seem fair to single out one utility for
25 reduced ROEs, making them less attractive to the

1 investment community unless they vote to achieve
2 their common free goals. The proponents of
3 reduced ROE offer no justification for disparate
4 treatment on this issue among Wisconsin
5 utilities.

6 The economic forces of higher
7 interest rates and significantly higher
8 inflation are having a negative impact on
9 everyone's family budgets, be they ratepayers
10 or shareholders. These forces are also driving
11 up the cost of operating a utility, buying fuel
12 and building new carbon-free generation
13 facilities.

14 Reducing ROEs from current levels
15 in the face of these economic forces would be
16 damaging not only to the utilities but to
17 shareholders and ratepayers as well.

18 In conclusion, the settlement
19 agreement and the ROEs proposed by the
20 utilities strike the proper balance between
21 consumer and shareholder interests, fairly and
22 competitively compensating investors for the use
23 of their capital. Therefore, we urge the
24 Commission to approve them as presented.
25 Thank you.

1 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you for your
2 comment.

3 So next up, Roger Cole, Michael
4 Komba, and Robert Kline.

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1 ROGER COLE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. COLE: Well, based on what I've
4 heard so far, I probably am not going to win any
5 popularity contest today.

6 Good afternoon, and thank you for
7 the opportunity to testify in this hearing. My
8 name is Roger Cole. I'm a retiree and a utility
9 share owner. I'm appearing here today to support
10 the settlement agreement in this case and to urge
11 the Commission to approve the proposed rate of
12 return of equity of 10 percent for Wisconsin
13 Electric Power, 10.2 percent for the Wisconsin
14 Gas.

15 As a retiree, I rely on my utility
16 dividend income to supplement my Social Security
17 and other retirements benefits. As an investor,
18 I have a wide range of investment options
19 available to me, including any number of utility
20 stocks from around the country.

21 I have chose to invest in
22 Wisconsin utilities for stability and competitive
23 yield in terms of dividends. If Wisconsin
24 utilities are not allowed the competitive rate of
25 the return on equity, it is likely they will

1 reduce the dividend yield, making them less
2 attractive to investors. As a result, I and many
3 others would likely choose other investment
4 options.

5 If WEC incomes are an unattractive
6 investment related to other utilities, they'll
7 have trouble generating efficient capital to
8 support the transition to low-carbon, wind and
9 solar generation. They will have to resort to
10 increased borrowing and even increased interest
11 rates which will cost ratepayers more in the long
12 run.

13 I recognize that rate regulation
14 is a balancing act between gas and electric rates
15 and rates of return on investment capital. In
16 this case, the companies are not even asking for
17 an increase in their rate of return on equity,
18 even though their borrowing costs have increased
19 dramatically over the last year as the Federal
20 Reserve raises interest rates. Failure to
21 provide an adequate rate of return will upset the
22 balance to the detriment of both the shareholder
23 and you and I, the ratepayer.

24 In closing, I urge the Commission
25 to approve the settlement and support by most of

1 the investors in this case and a rate of return
2 on equity proposed by Wisconsin Energy. Thank
3 you.

4 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

5 Michael Komba is next and then
6 Robert Kline and then Hannah Mortensen.

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1 MICHAEL KOMBA, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. KOMBA: It must be very nice to be
4 able to have extra money every month to invest
5 it. Most of us in this room do not know what
6 that feels like, and most of us in Milwaukee, I
7 think, don't either to be honest.

8 I've worked at Casa Maria, which
9 is -- it's Casa Maria Catholic Worker. It's a
10 house for homeless families on 21st and Highland.
11 I've worked there for a little over 20 years.
12 Casa Maria has been around for over 55 years.
13 We're a house for homeless families.

14 I can tell you with 100 percent
15 certainty that if this increase goes through,
16 homelessness will increase, poverty will
17 increase, the amount of kids who go to school
18 feeling horrible will increase because they can't
19 put a fan in their window to cool off the house
20 in the summertime. You know, they'll go to
21 school maybe not having enough food because
22 We Energies is raising their rates.

23 This is the reality of what's
24 happening, and that's pure sin to me. That's
25 pure sin. Even asking for this increase, to me,

1 is just pure sin, and I think it's evil.

2 The idea that somehow We Energies
3 needs this money for clean energy, that's a lie.
4 Until very recently, We Energies made people pay
5 fees for having their own solar panels in their
6 own houses; and the only reason they stopped is
7 because activists demanded they stop.

8 So they don't actually care about
9 people. We Energies does not care about people.
10 They only care about their bottom line. And I'm
11 sorry about your retirement benefits, but
12 honestly, the lives of people is worth more than
13 a dividend. That's the truth of the matter.

14 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Robert Kline.

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1 ROBERT KLINE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. KLINE: I'm not a fan of rate hikes
4 either. I've seen a lot of businesses that
5 haven't done the rate hikes, and they're out of
6 business now.

7 I think -- what I'm after really
8 is to see the infrastructure completed and have
9 the grid fixed up like it should be so that we're
10 not out of power, have the renewable energies,
11 the turbines and solar energy so that it would be
12 complete. If one goes out, we've always got the
13 other.

14 You know, if they can do this
15 without raising your hike -- you know, hiking
16 your rates and stuff, so much the better, but I
17 don't know if there's another way out. So thank
18 you very much.

19 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Okay. Thank you.
20 Hannah Mortensen.

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1 HANNAH MORTENSEN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. MORTENSEN: Hello. My name is
4 Hannah Mortensen. I'm the executive director of
5 the Physicians for Social Responsibility
6 Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Environmental Health
7 Network. We are based in Madison but serve all
8 across the state. We are a team of health
9 professionals and activists concerned about the
10 health of Wisconsinites.

11 Also, I am a We Energies
12 customer. I live in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, and
13 I'm a gas energy customer myself. A rate
14 increase has significant impacts on the health of
15 a community and especially BIPOC communities. We
16 need to recognize that energy burden is a health
17 issue.

18 The energy burden, the amount of
19 your income you spend on utilities of households
20 in predominantly black and Hispanic/Latinx
21 neighborhoods is roughly double that of
22 households in predominantly white neighborhoods.
23 The people in these neighborhoods will suffer the
24 most from this increase.

25 Recent analysis and studies have

1 found that energy burden is a central social
2 determinant of health. Energy burden is so
3 influential on premature mortality, self-reported
4 health and life expectancy that only race,
5 education have stronger influences than energy
6 burden.

7 Additionally, higher energy
8 burden is associated with asthma, respiratory
9 issues, and increased mental health impacts,
10 not to mention in cases where energy burdens
11 are too high, households often sacrifice health
12 to pay for energy bills, leading to chronic
13 stress and exacerbated health care costs down
14 the road.

15 More than 25 million U.S.
16 households report reducing or foregoing food or
17 medications to pay for their electricity costs.
18 This situation is often referred to as heat or
19 eat and poses a high risk of malnutrition of
20 children.

21 Furthermore, We Energies claims
22 that they are raising our rates to switch to
23 clean energy, but they just announced they are
24 delaying the retirement of coal plants in
25 Wisconsin. Wisconsin ratepayers like me already

1 pay higher rates than most states in the Midwest.
2 Meanwhile, our utilities are reporting higher
3 profits. We need affordable energy for our
4 families, not increases for shareholders. It is
5 time for us to invest in communities and not
6 fossil fuels.

7 As a representative of PSR
8 Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Environmental
9 Health Network and for the health of people in
10 Wisconsin, I urge We Energies to reduce the
11 rate increase proposal; two, I ask that
12 We Energies establish and prioritize programs
13 for high energy burdened households that
14 improve their energy efficiency and
15 weatherization; and three, I encourage them to
16 honor the community agreement put forth by the
17 Wisconsin Environmental Justice Infrastructure
18 Initiative and create a diverse stakeholder
19 group to oversee goals and funds.

20 In conclusion, I just want to
21 thank the Commissioners for their time today and
22 listening to us all, and I want to thank you for
23 all for attending today.

24 EXAMINER NEWMARK: So I just wanted to
25 note, the last witness did submit a written

1 document with some citations, and I'm going to
2 include that with her appearance slip. So that
3 will be in the record too.

4 So we have Jill Ferguson next and
5 then Joseph Duncan and Mildred Green.

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1 JILL FERGUSON, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. FERGUSON: First of all, I want to
4 thank Chris Larson for coming today and for
5 standing up for we the people.

6 I want you to know that I invited
7 Tim Michels and Ron Johnson to come to this
8 because I continue to get their nonsense in the
9 mail. Every single day, I get this from Michels
10 stating that he's going to lower home income
11 costs. Where are you, Tim? You know, I'm
12 waitin' for you here. Every day, I get these,
13 every single day. And I'm sick of it. Thank you
14 for picking that up. I'm sorry.

15 Okay. So here we go. So I'm
16 going to take this --

17 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Why don't you go
18 slower so she can --

19 MS. FERGUSON: Oh, you want me to go
20 slower.

21 EXAMINER NEWMARK: -- keep up with you.
22 She's typing.

23 MS. FERGUSON: I'm trying to get
24 through it. I'm really nervous about this.

25 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Just take your time.

1 She's typing what you're saying.

2 MS. FERGUSON: All right. I'm going to
3 go really, really slow now.

4 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Not really, really
5 slow.

6 MS. FERGUSON: Okay. Well, what do you
7 want? You're making me break here.

8 Okay. So I'm going to take a
9 quote from an article I read called, How big
10 utilities are impeding clean energy and what we
11 can do about it.

12 So as the U.S. faces intersecting
13 crises, particularly climate change and racial
14 and economic inequality, concentrated power in
15 the electricity sector obstructs progress in
16 providing Americans with clean, safe and cost
17 effective electricity.

18 While this can be true of any type
19 of electric utility including public and
20 cooperatives, corporate utilities provide a
21 particular brand of problems. For two decades,
22 mergers in the corporate electricity sector
23 have concentrated economic and political power
24 in the hands of fewer companies that favor
25 bloated returns, excuse me, for their

1 shareholders over delivering for their customers
2 and communities.

3 Corporate utilities increasingly
4 control how electricity is generated,
5 transmitted and distributed or sold to the
6 customer resulting in both a lack of safety
7 measures as well as costly, shortsighted and
8 dirty energy investments. This affects all of
9 us as we confront our climate crisis and
10 disproportionately harms the communities of
11 color and low-income households that live near
12 dirty power plants and within warmer inner
13 cities.

14 Utility Commissioners play a
15 fundamental role, and we're here to talk about
16 that with you, and I thank you for inviting us.
17 You play a fundamental role in monitoring
18 competition in electricity markets. You need to
19 ensure that the utility Commission candidates
20 both understand their role, protecting the public
21 interests and the issues related to the
22 concentrated power of investor-owned utilities in
23 the energy sector.

24 Like I said, I invited Tim Michels
25 and Ron Johnson, both mega millionaires, making

1 false claims that they're here to help us out. I
2 brought along -- I like to bring props like that
3 coal that I brought the last time. So this is
4 for all you stockholders that are worried that
5 you aren't gonna make enough money cuz y'all are
6 doing just fine, and I welcome you to go
7 somewhere or put your money somewhere else, okay,
8 a little more green friendly because this is
9 unsustainable. Dirty energy is unsustainable to
10 people and plants, period. It's not funny
11 either. Wipe that grin off your face, you --

12 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right, ma'am.

13 MS. FERGUSON: Look it.

14 EXAMINER NEWMARK: No, no. You can
15 just --

16 MS. FERGUSON: Okay. Anyway, so here
17 we go. So I made a little chart here today, and
18 we got the game of Monopoly. We got We Energies,
19 and it says monopolies are so much fun.

20 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Hang on. Just off
21 the record for a minute.

22 (Discussion off the record.)

23 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Let's get back on
24 the record.

25 MS. FERGUSON: So then I said just like

1 the Republicans Michels and Johnson do, they
2 blame Evers and Biden for everything.

3 So once again so yeah. So I
4 said, Just blame Governor Evers for our CEO's
5 greed. Here what's what the CEOs of
6 We Energies make, and I've got this to pass
7 around. 7,533,000 a year, 7 million 324,
8 4 million 787 -- here's a lowball -- 2 million
9 593, and 4 million 49 hundred thousand dollars.

10 This is insane. This is insane.
11 And all the people that came up today to talk
12 about how they can't -- the housing market is
13 insane. People can't afford to have a roof over
14 their head, yet to heat it as well.

15 So this is, again, a tax on the
16 poor. Y'all love playing Monopoly. It's time to
17 think about someone else other than yourself.
18 I've got a great book, as well, as another prop
19 here. This is a great book by Mr. Dylan Ratigan.
20 The title of it is Greedy Bastards: How we Stop
21 Corporate Vultures, Gangsters and Other Vampires
22 from Sucking America Dry.

23 Thank you for your time.

24 EXAMINER NEWMARK: That's it? Great.

25 MS. FERGUSON: And I got these for the

1 commissioners. You want me to keep going? I can
2 keep going. I got some more.

3 EXAMINER NEWMARK: So what do you want
4 to submit?

5 MS. FERGUSON: What do I want to
6 submit? Oh, here, I brought one of these for
7 everybody on the panel so you can see how much
8 the We Energies executives make.

9 EXAMINER NEWMARK: The document that
10 you're passing to me says, How much is enough for
11 you? I'll put that in the record along with your
12 appearance.

13 MS. FERGUSON: So my question to you
14 sir, is how much is enough for you? Cuz we're
15 told 7.25 an hour is enough for us.

16 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Let's go
17 off the record.

18 (Discussion off the record.)

19 EXAMINER NEWMARK: We have Joseph
20 Duncan and Mildred Green coming up and Joan
21 Shafer.

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1 JOSEPH DUNCAN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. DUNCAN: Joseph Duncan,
4 D-u-n-c-a-n, 1260 North 43rd Street, Milwaukee,
5 Wisconsin 53208.

6 Members of the committee, today
7 I'm contacting you, talking in my private
8 capacity against proposed changes within
9 5-UR-110.

10 I want to start off by reminding
11 the committee why you are here today. You are
12 the result of a 1907 law where Wisconsin became
13 one of the first states in America to regulate
14 public utilities. You are the will of the
15 people to ensure that the utility charges
16 affordable rates.

17 The fact that Citizen Utility
18 Board, CUB, exists is proof that time and time
19 again you roll over against us, the residents of
20 Wisconsin. You are putting our best interests
21 aside and instead place a higher value on
22 high-paid lawyers and lobbyists, accepting the
23 highest rates in their region. That needs to
24 change.

25 You need to enforce budget billing

1 and deferred payments agreements. We Energies is
2 ending this program for small businesses which
3 depend on this. This is listed in your Bill of
4 Rights. Enforce it.

5 I am here today because
6 We Energies brags about you, about your past
7 efforts that it makes huge profits for its
8 shareholders. We Energies, at last check, has
9 risen to the rank of 7th highest among 51
10 Midwest utilities, and its rate increase has far
11 exceeded the inflation level over the past 20
12 years.

13 From its own website, we
14 consistently deliver among the best total returns
15 in the industry and continue to target a dividend
16 payout ratio of 65 to 70 percent of earnings.
17 Shame on We Energies.

18 The shareholders are doing their
19 best and doing so well that they have approved
20 company spending on advertising to boost its
21 image with slogans like People you can trust,
22 Energy you can depend on. Consider that if it's
23 a legal monopoly with no competition, why is such
24 advertisement needed?

25 We Energies approves sponsorship

1 of just about any sports team you can think of,
2 including the Milwaukee Bucks, Brewers, Green Bay
3 Packers, Milwaukee Admirals, and various teams by
4 both UW-Milwaukee and Marquette University.

5 They all carry these We Energies
6 ads designed to make us feel better about a
7 company with some of the highest rates in the
8 Midwest. But the company, through its publicity
9 regulated, won't disclose how much it spends on
10 this campaign. They haven't thanked me yet for
11 the sponsorship.

12 In fact, the PSC, you guys don't
13 have the authority to regulate or scrutinize how
14 investors use their return on investments. I'm
15 paying for this philanthropy.

16 PSC, you need to make the hard
17 decisions, maybe the first in the Commission, to
18 make the hard choice that every American is
19 making right now and put We Energies on a diet.
20 Every American is doing more for less, and now
21 it's We Energies' turn. I dare you to make
22 We Energies' profits be anything less than 7 out
23 of 51.

24 Wisconsinites and I simply cannot
25 afford this rate increase. Aging seniors need to

1 stay in their homes. I've seen during home
2 visits with elderly Wisconsin residents, in the
3 only home they have owned their whole life,
4 putting electrical tape over light switches to
5 remind guests not to turn on lights.

6 They are living in darkness after
7 the sun goes down. The only appliance in their
8 home that's plugging in is either a television or
9 a radio and the refrigerator. It's all they can
10 afford.

11 I'll keep it short. Any questions
12 from the committee?

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks a lot.

14 MR. DUNCAN: Thank you.

15 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Mildred Green, Joan
16 Shafer, and James C. Haertel.

17 MS. GREER: It's Greer, Greer.

18 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Oh, sorry. I didn't
19 see that right.

20 MS. GREER: That's okay.

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1 MILDRED GREER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. GREER: Good afternoon, everyone.
4 You got me now, huh?

5 Good afternoon. First of all, I
6 want to say that I totally disagree with the
7 raise from We Energies. We Energies has been
8 sucking the life out of people for years, and
9 they're still doing it. I moved in my home seven
10 years ago, and I haven't had a bill under \$210
11 ever since I been there. Summer and winter, it's
12 always over \$200.

13 I call We Energies, and they told
14 us, well, maybe you need to put insulation in.
15 It was already insulated, but we put more
16 insulation in, plus we had all new windows put
17 in, and it's still over \$220. They're just
18 sucking us dry.

19 And I live on the northwest side,
20 and my husband and I both are on fixed incomes;
21 and there is just no way we can afford an
22 increase like that because if you don't pay that
23 bill, the first thing they gonna do is gonna cut
24 your light and gas off. And so that is totally
25 unfair to the people, especially the blacks and

1 Latinos and all of the people that live in the
2 inner city.

3 They know we can't afford that,
4 but they wanna put it on the houses. But the
5 people on the far south side, they get bills, but
6 theirs is nothing like ours. I worked with a
7 young lady, and she was complaining that she got
8 an \$80 gas bill in the winter, \$80; and here we
9 paying 220. So it's just wrong.

10 And I agree with everything that
11 all the others have said. They did a beautiful
12 job explaining it. I just want to add that I do
13 not agree with this increase.

14 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

15 Joan Shafer, James Haertel, and
16 Allie Moore up next.

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1 JOAN SHAFER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. SHAFER: Good afternoon. My name
4 is Joan Shafer, and I want to speak on behalf of
5 the work that I'm familiar with that We Energies
6 does through its employees, retirees and through
7 the We Energies Foundation in support of youth
8 and education.

9 I'm a retired executive, having
10 worked at WEC Energy Group, We Energies, and its
11 predecessors companies for almost 40 years.
12 During that time, I volunteered at many
13 organizations prior to my retirement, which was
14 about four and a half years ago; and since then
15 I've been very involved on the boards of many
16 organizations in the youth-serving and education
17 sectors, specifically Girl Scouts, Mount Mary
18 University, First Stage, PAVE, which is Partners
19 Advancing Values through Education, which is now
20 Schools That Can, Seton Catholic Schools,
21 Milwaukee Montessori School, Pius XI Catholic
22 High School and University Lake School.

23 The We Energies Foundation has
24 significantly contributed to these and many other
25 youth-serving and educational organizations. I

1 can speak directly to several examples of
2 We Energies' work in the community. The
3 foundation helped fund facilities for the food
4 science program at Mount Mary University. Mount
5 Mary is a Hispanic-serving organization, a
6 designated organization, serves many
7 first-generation college students and does it
8 very well.

9 The foundation supported the
10 development of science, technology and
11 engineering and math through the International
12 Drone Competition held last year at the Pettit
13 Center hosted by Milwaukee Montessori, and
14 We Energies was the lead sponsor. This year,
15 with We Energies' support, the competition is
16 being extended to grade and high schools in the
17 area.

18 We Energies is also actively in
19 partnership with Milwaukee Public High Schools on
20 an apprenticeship program for its gas, electric,
21 and design technician occupations, directly
22 helping students with mentorship and career
23 advice. The company has also supported its
24 employees and volunteer work through
25 participation in leadership activities, coaching

1 and many other volunteer activities which are
2 critical to the success of many nonprofit groups
3 in this area.

4 We Energies' employee
5 participation and foundation support ensures that
6 our communities remain strong and vibrant. I
7 support the rate increase.

8 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

9 I just wanted to check. Off the
10 record.

11 (Discussion off the record.)

12 EXAMINER NEWMARK: We have James
13 Haertel.

14 (Witness sworn.)

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1 JAMES HAERTEL, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. HAERTEL: My name is Jim Haertel,
4 and I've lived in Milwaukee all my life.

5 I had the unfortunate experience
6 of becoming a partner with a We Energies
7 subsidiary called WISPARK, a development firm;
8 and I was involved in the Pabst Brewery project
9 and instrumental in helping save the Pabst
10 Brewery. But WISPARK turned out to be a very
11 negative partner. It was a very horrible
12 experience. By the way, thank you,
13 Commissioners, for being here and hearing us.

14 I got to see on the inside a
15 little bit what no one gets to see. I was at
16 meetings at We Energies, a very opulent building,
17 very opulent offices for all their very high-paid
18 executives.

19 And then I got involved in a
20 lawsuit with them where they hired the most
21 expensive firm in Milwaukee, who hired another
22 firm in Chicago, who hired another firm in
23 New York to help fight us; and amazingly, we
24 prevailed because we were on the side of right,
25 and they chose the side of wrong. And then there

1 was a lawsuit where they had to pay us a huge sum
2 of money for all the terrible things they did
3 over a number of years.

4 Sounds great for me, but where did
5 that money come from? I know where it came from.
6 It didn't come out of their personal pockets. It
7 somehow comes out of We Energies to provide a
8 10 and 10.2 percent return for their
9 shareholders. I think that's great, get
10 10 percent.

11 I agree with Senator Larson. I
12 think in light of everything that's happening in
13 this world right now, maybe 9 percent should be
14 enough, not 10 or 10.2. Everybody's being asked
15 to hold back and tighten their belts.

16 I mean, I was on the inside. The
17 opulence -- I mean, I don't know -- they're
18 involved with country clubs. We went to the
19 finest restaurants, everything paid for, top of
20 the line.

21 I think a government-controlled
22 monopoly should get by with barely enough to
23 provide the utilities that we need at the lowest
24 cost possible. How can they afford to pay all
25 these lawyers, all these high-priced expenses?

1 It just goes on and on.

2 And like the other gentleman said
3 before, why does the only utility we need -- or
4 that we can choose from need to advertise? How
5 much money is going into advertising to tell us
6 that the energy is nicer, that we should like our
7 utility. I don't care.

8 In fact, every time I see
9 We Energies, guess how that makes me feel? And I
10 gotta see it all over the place, and we're all
11 paying for it. We're paying for their
12 advertising when we have no other choice but to
13 use them.

14 If you want to get gas or
15 electricity from somewhere else, where do you go?
16 To another city or another state. We shouldn't
17 have to move. We love our city, we love our
18 state. I love the reliability of our utility,
19 but cut out the fat.

20 You can get your 10 percent, but
21 it would be a lot lower if you cut out all the
22 fat. I'm a CPA. You can go through line by line
23 and look -- and the public and the Commission I'm
24 sure could see --

25 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Off the record.

1 (Discussion off the record.)

2 MR. HAERTEL: I guess that's just my
3 point. I feel -- I'm fortunate not to be living
4 paycheck to paycheck, but I feel for those that
5 do.

6 I used to be a landlord renting to
7 people, and I actually lowered rent when I could
8 see they can't afford the rent and the utilities.
9 I could peek in the fridge and see they're not
10 eating.

11 You know, maybe it's time, like
12 Larson said, to lower that return a little bit,
13 just given the hard times that we're in right
14 now. But at the very least start looking at all
15 the fat that could be cut out that will still
16 lower our rates somewhat and still give the
17 retirees their 10 percent return. That's a
18 win-win for everybody.

19 So my message is cut out the fat.

20 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Let's move on with
21 Duril White. There you go.

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1 DURIL WHITE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. WHITE: Good afternoon. My name is

4 Duril White, and I am a resident of Metcalfe

5 Park. I work, live in Metcalfe Park, 15th

6 District, City of Milwaukee.

7 Power corrupts. Absolute power

8 absolutely corrupts. We Energies has had a

9 monopoly on the energy systems in Wisconsin for

10 as long as I can remember. Born and raised in

11 Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I remember Ma Bell, and

12 then you had Wisconsin Gas, and then you had

13 Wisconsin Electric. Okay? There was some

14 separation there.

15 But when you allow a monopoly, a

16 company to come in and completely control the

17 system, okay, whereby the customers are really

18 their slaves now, we feel very taken advantage

19 of. Okay? You leaving a lot of people without a

20 pot to piss in, a window to throw it out of, a

21 crime that will scream in quarter. Okay?

22 So what about the mothers with

23 children who have to decide on am I gonna feed my

24 children tonight or am I gonna pay the light bill

25 tomorrow? What about the seniors who on a fixed

1 income, who on Social Security, who don't get a
2 raise? You don't think about that.

3 But corruption is corruption. An
4 injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere.
5 So we not gonna stand for it. We gonna fight the
6 power -- and that sounds kinda cliché when you
7 talkin' about the power company. But Public
8 Enemy says, Fight the power, we gonna fight the
9 powers that be.

10 So we're not going to continue to
11 stand for you slapping us in the face. Y'all
12 making plenty of money. From what I looked at
13 here, if I added it up correctly, your top five
14 executives make over \$26 million a year,
15 \$26 million a year. On average they make
16 \$5 million a year apiece. That's the ratio.
17 They taught me that in accounting.

18 If they just gave 10 percent,
19 took 10 percent of what they give the top five
20 executives, 10 percent of 26 million is
21 2.6 million. If they took that 2.6 million
22 and divided it amongst the hardest hit
23 communities, they wouldn't have to do a
24 13 percent hike.

25 We understand that sometimes

1 things must go up. We're faced with double-digit
2 inflation. We're facing a recession. We're
3 coming out of a global pandemic. So everybody's
4 hurting, everybody's suffering. So what you're
5 doing is adding insult to injury.

6 So how long do you think the
7 people gonna stand for that? Fight the power.
8 Thank you for your time.

9 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right.

10 Maria Beltram.

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1 MARIA BELTRAM, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. BELTRAM: My name is Maria Beltram.

4 I'm a homeowner of a 113-year-old duplex in
5 Lindsay Heights community for 30-plus years.

6 I was born and raised in
7 Milwaukee, always on the north side. I'm a
8 mother of now seven adult children and
9 grandmother of seven grandchildren. I worked
10 since I was 11 years old, but for the last six
11 years or so, I have been disabled. I'm on a
12 fixed income that doesn't go up at all. I do not
13 rent my duplex, so I do not have an extra income.
14 I pay the bills for both meters.

15 I am a legal guardian for my two
16 grandsons with special needs. We Energies, help
17 keep my family safe and healthy because I can't
18 afford to pay these bills and take care of my
19 grandsons because I can't afford it. Make it
20 affordable for me to keep my utilities on all
21 year-round. My income has not changed in six
22 years. So what gives you the right to raise and
23 change the rates that we always pay? And it goes
24 up every year, every year.

25 Myself, I'm poor. I say I live in

1 a rich community, but we all have -- we're poor;
2 we can't afford it. I live in a community of
3 elders, people with disabilities like myself,
4 and, you know, we're unfortunate in our
5 neighborhood.

6 I am asthmatic, and five of my
7 seven children are asthmatic; and in my
8 testimony, I want you guys to know, ever since I
9 been a utility consumer, out of the five
10 children that I have of the seven, once they hit,
11 like, three weeks old, it was always -- we were
12 always in the hospital, always in the hospital;
13 and that was twice a year, always after the
14 moratorium is lifted and disconnect happens. So
15 our asthmatic babies get sick or the heat is not
16 on right away, and we're cold. So that triggers
17 a cold, so that triggers our asthmatics so we
18 catch respiratory viral infections so now we're
19 in the hospital.

20 I use a CPAP machine because I
21 stop breathing in the middle of the night while
22 I'm lying down. If I don't have my utility on,
23 I'll die in my sleep. So who's gonna take care
24 of my grandchildren? Is We Energies gonna pay
25 child support? Okay.

1 The young woman that came up and
2 said she worked for them so many years, all those
3 places that you say they gave money to is not in
4 my community. All those schools that I applied
5 myself to go, I couldn't afford to go, and I was
6 an A honor roll student, but my parents couldn't
7 afford to send me there.

8 Even to go to Mount Mary College,
9 it's expensive. I had to choose to go there or
10 my community college, and I chose to go to my
11 community college because I couldn't afford it.

12 So out of that list that you --
13 was named, they didn't -- she didn't mention any
14 of our community colleges or any of our public
15 schools because they were all private you're
16 giving to. So those places are not my places,
17 and I've never been to those places nor my
18 children or the children in my community.

19 Our schools are poor. Give to
20 them. Stop giving to the Milwaukee County Zoo
21 that we can't even afford to go to. You make it
22 nice and beautiful for everybody that's wealthy
23 to enjoy with their families, and you give us one
24 day out of the year or two times out of the year
25 so it'll be free. I don't know how many times

1 because I only go there when it's free. But it's
2 so expensive to buy the food. My kids gotta see
3 other kids having the treats that they can afford
4 and still pay their We Energies bill, and we
5 can't.

6 Like I said, please, if you wanna
7 give anything, invest in us, invest in us. Give
8 back to our poor communities, not just the rich
9 ones. Okay? And everyone that has testified,
10 gave their testimony, you said it all exactly
11 like how it's happening, and this needs to stop,
12 because We Energies, with you raising your rates
13 and keeping it not affordable for me nor my
14 community, you keep us unsafe, and we stay
15 unhealthy.

16 Do something positive, and give
17 back to us and don't take this -- and don't allow
18 this rate change to happen.

19 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

20 Dynasty Ceasar.

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1 DYNASTY CEASAR, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. CEASAR: So I want to start by
4 acknowledging what Ms. Maria said. When you
5 think about a house that was built 135 years ago,
6 that house was not built to withstand the issues
7 related to climate change.

8 So when we think about how these
9 homes in black and brown communities are being
10 affected, they were built before 1920. You
11 expect for those homes to be cool during today's
12 climate? No. Those homes are going to be
13 incredibly hot. And so what happens is we turn
14 our AC on. Why? Because our landlords do not
15 provide us with free air or free heat.

16 So what We Energies is
17 participating in is structural and systemic
18 racism because we're not understanding how your
19 systems are connected and how you're oppressing
20 communities of color. They're already struggling
21 to pay their rent, okay, and we've heard that
22 multiple times. I really don't see it settling
23 in.

24 I'm a face watcher. I watched
25 many faces. I've listened to people come up

1 here and say things. I don't think it's settling
2 in. And what I will tell you right now is this
3 the 3:00 session. When the 6:00 people get in
4 here, please understand the vibe is gonna be a
5 little more intense. Folks are off work and
6 ready to talk about this, honestly. So this is a
7 warmup.

8 And I'm really struggling with
9 how over-policed people who are concerned and
10 experiencing these things have been. If
11 somebody comes up here and is frustrated, they
12 have the right to be frustrated. They have gone
13 without lights. Their food has spoiled in their
14 refrigerator, the food that they are working
15 hard to get; and now it is spoiled, and you
16 expect for them to watch and monitor their tone?
17 That's ridiculous. What are we asking people to
18 do?

19 And to the folks that came up here
20 to support it, all of you came up here in suits.
21 Not a soul that is talking about how they're
22 experiencing this is coming up here in a suit.
23 So if you cannot handle what we're saying to you,
24 you should probably leave.

25 And to the woman who talked about

1 the institutions that We Energies supports, those
2 are predominantly white institutions. I went to
3 Mount Mary. So you can't tell me about my
4 classmates that I looked at. They were white.

5 Mount Mary has just started
6 focusing on being an institution that supports
7 communities of color. Don't talk to me about
8 Montessori schools. Who goes to Montessori
9 schools? Who can afford to go to Montessori
10 schools? Montessori schools allow -- you have to
11 get on a list when your kid is probably in your
12 womb. So don't talk to me about what you
13 support. You have not supported a thing.

14 And also if you really want to
15 support and donate, maybe you should think about
16 how your utility is affecting the homes of those
17 kids that you're donating money to. Does that
18 make any sense? You create the issue, and you
19 donate money to try to fix it? You're not doing
20 anything but making yourself feel better.

21 We don't have time for that.
22 People are struggling. So don't come in here
23 trying to encourage us to, oh, well, you know, I
24 have a modest income. A modest income? How much
25 does that suit cost, sir? Don't -- we're not --

1 none of these people in here are imbeciles, and
2 you will not treat us like that. You will not
3 insult our intelligence that way.

4 So I'm going to go back to my
5 chair because I've sat here and I've listened and
6 I'm gotten incredibly frustrated, and this is as
7 calm as I can be right now.

8 So what I will say is, again, when
9 you think about the housing stock in black and
10 brown communities, they cannot withstand the test
11 of time with climate change; and therefore, those
12 homes are heating up and getting more hot than
13 those in white communities.

14 And if you think about it, a lot
15 of our neighborhoods don't have a lot of trees.
16 So when it gets hot in the summertime, there's no
17 shade on our houses. So we have to turn our air
18 conditioning on. We have to do that or we will
19 die.

20 I can't remember what news media
21 reported this, but as early as next year, we will
22 have at least one 125-degree day. Do you think
23 we're going to survive that if we can't turn our
24 air conditioning on? No, we are not.

25 So you have to see this issue,

1 and it can't be looked at in a one-dimensional
2 way. You can't just say, Oh, we're increasing
3 your energy, and that's it. No. You're
4 keeping me from being able to afford to live in
5 my home. This is a multifaceted issue. It's
6 not just about energy. If you are listening,
7 folks are talking about being able to choose
8 between energy and eating and sleeping. This
9 is a multifaceted issue. It's not one
10 dimensional.

11 So I -- I don't know what you're
12 going to do when you leave from this space, but
13 stop tapping yourself on the back because there's
14 nothing to celebrate here. People are dying.
15 People are losing sleep. People can't afford any
16 increases.

17 So I will end this by saying
18 you've had the 2:00 session. When people get off
19 of work, if you can't handle this, just
20 understand you're gonna be in for the truth.
21 This is this warm-up, and that's all I have to
22 say.

23 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Okay. Thank you.

24 So let's have Anita Johnson.

25 Anyone else with a time constraint? Because

1 we're going to take about a ten-minute break
2 after Anita Johnson and get back to it from
3 there.

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1 ANITA JOHNSON, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. JOHNSON: Hello. My name is Anita
4 Johnson, and I am afraid of a 13 percent
5 increment in our utilities. I'm afraid for the
6 children whose parents cannot afford the
7 increase.

8 When you don't have lights, you
9 don't have a refrigerator. These children will
10 not be able to have breakfast before they go to
11 school if they can't afford to put the food in
12 their house. These children will be cold at
13 night and will not be able to function properly
14 when they go to school.

15 I am afraid for the senior
16 citizens and the people with disabilities who are
17 not computer savvy, who do not know what to do if
18 they need help. I'm afraid for them. These
19 people die in their homes. I have been paying my
20 bill under protest for the past six months
21 because there was an increment. How many am I
22 gonna have? And I write across my bill, Pay
23 under protest, and I will continue to do that. I
24 don't know if it makes a difference or not, but
25 if you don't say anything, you don't get

1 anything.

2 We do not need a 13 percent
3 increase. Please consider your customers and the
4 effect that it will have on their pocketbooks and
5 their daily lives. Thank you.

6 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you. So we
7 are going to take ten minutes here. Everyone
8 stretch for a minute, and we'll be back -- let's
9 see -- it's about 3:40. So ten to 4:00 we'll be
10 back up and take a lot more comments to go.

11 (Recess taken from 3:40 p.m.
12 until 3:58 p.m.)

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Allie Moore.

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1 ALLIE MOORE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. MOORE: My name is Allie Moore, and
4 I lived in my home for 53 years. I been on the
5 We Energies budget for at least 45 years, and I
6 thought I was saving money. I notice here lately
7 in the past three years, it's constantly going
8 up, up, up.

9 Now, okay. They just raised it
10 two months ago. Now they gonna raise it again in
11 January. And I was wondering if they gonna --
12 how can they do that with the one that they just
13 went up one. Would that be included in the \$14,
14 that the average person pay \$14.

15 And another thing, I'm paying for
16 the streetlights, and I'm paying almost more than
17 anybody else. One of my neighbors got up and
18 down three, four bills, now he only pay 98 cent.
19 I pay \$12 and something. My brother-in-law pays
20 \$13, and I don't know how that happened.

21 I called, only for them to say,
22 Oh, we gonna straighten it out because we just
23 got this, we just started that. But I don't know
24 if they did or not because I asked my neighbor,
25 and he say, yeah, he still paying 98 cent. I

1 said I'm still paying \$12. So I don't know how
2 that could be. So I call it down to me, and I'm
3 the poorest person in the neighborhood. That's
4 what was my concern.

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Okay. Thank you.

6 I just want to let you know that
7 in another room in this building, if you go
8 across the lobby, there's representatives from
9 the company and Commission staff. If you have a
10 particular question about your bill, they can
11 answer that for you. They can look up your
12 account and answer any questions. So maybe it'd
13 be a good idea just to talk to them directly now,
14 and see if they'll answer that.

15 Okay. Michelle Kramer.

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1 MICHELLE KRAMER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. KRAMER: My name is Michelle
4 Kramer, and I work for Menomonee Valley Partners.
5 We are a nonprofit organization here in the City
6 of Milwaukee, and we partnered with We Energies
7 over the years on the revitalization of the
8 Menomonee River Valley, an area that was once
9 filled with vacant buildings and abandoned land
10 but is now a national model of environmental
11 sustainability and economic development. That's
12 brought many jobs back to our community.

13 On behalf of our organization, I
14 am simply here to share that We Energies has been
15 a partner in our work over the last two decades.
16 We are currently working with the organization to
17 clean up legacy industrial contamination in
18 Milwaukee's rivers as part of the Milwaukee
19 estuary area of concern efforts; and there are,
20 you know, over a dozen -- over 20 organizations
21 working on that effort together.

22 So We Energies has been a
23 community partner in these efforts, and we expect
24 them to be a community partner in the years to
25 come.

1 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Okay. Thank you.

2 Shana Callbreath, and we have

3 Peter Burgelis and Joshua Taylor.

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1 SHANA CALLBREATH, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. CALLBREATH: Hi. My name is Shana
4 Callbreath, and today I just wanted to say a
5 couple of things about the rate case request.

6 I understand that nobody wants to
7 pay more money for anything, and we're paying a
8 lot for everything right now. But We Energies is
9 making very important investments in
10 infrastructure that will benefit all of us, not
11 just some of us, but it benefits all of us; and
12 it really is necessary if we want to have the
13 reliable power that we expect.

14 I use power for everything, you
15 know, from the toothbrush to your phone to --
16 when you think of everything that you use power
17 for. It's very important that we continue to
18 have that reliable power that we enjoy and that
19 we really expect from our utility.

20 I'm glad to see that they are
21 taking the sensible approach to their renewable
22 energy efforts. They understand the importance
23 of renewable energy, but they also understand
24 the importance of a mix of energy, again, to
25 continue to make sure we have reliable power.

1 And as I said, no one wants to pay more, but when
2 I look at the infrastructure needs that this rate
3 case is paying for, I do believe that the
4 Commission should approve this rate case. Thank
5 you.

6 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks.

7 So Supervisor Peter Burgelis next,
8 then Joshua Taylor, Sabine Peterka, and Ryan
9 Clancy.

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1 PETER BURGELIS, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. BURGELIS: Hi. My name is Peter
4 Burgelis. I'm Milwaukee County supervisor for
5 District 15 which includes Washington Park. This
6 is -- I've just lost my notes.

7 I apologize for the delay.

8 EXAMINER NEWMARK: That's all right.
9 No problem.

10 MR. BURGELIS: Thank you to the Public
11 Service Commission for coming to Milwaukee and to
12 Washington Park to hear testimony today from
13 residents.

14 Thank you to the Public Service
15 Commission for coming to Milwaukee and Washington
16 Park and my district to hear testimony from
17 residents. This district is diverse and
18 stretches from here on the north side -- on the
19 near north side to Alverno on the south side, but
20 one common thing from my constituents is that
21 higher energy costs affect our most vulnerable
22 and threaten our health and quality of life for
23 residents throughout Milwaukee County.

24 Candidly, the Administrative Law
25 Judge's callous attitude and preemptive apology

1 to not even try to pronounce names correctly
2 should question your willingness to moderate the
3 public meeting in a diverse community. In
4 Milwaukee, we don't dismiss people that are
5 different from ourselves. Today is the time to
6 start to try and do better.

7 And I urge the Public Service
8 Commission to demand We Energies do better for
9 our community. Post-pandemic Wisconsin is not an
10 opportunity to start lining shareholders' pockets
11 with even higher profits. Rate increases affect
12 our most vulnerable residents, and the most --
13 rate increases affect our most vulnerable
14 residents, and these sky high rates are just
15 wrong.

16 Safeguarding profits at the
17 expense of our community is wrong. I urge the
18 Public Service Commission to reject these rate
19 increases and always consider community first.
20 Responsible community partners put people before
21 profits.

22 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

23 Okay. Joshua Taylor, then Sabine
24 Peterka and Ryan Clancy.

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1 JOSHUA TAYLOR, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. TAYLOR: Good afternoon, everyone.

4 I'd like to start off by saying
5 how obscene this is from We Energies. They're
6 looking to increase rates 13 percent.

7 13 percent. We already know we are dealing
8 with high inflation. People are paying, you
9 know, exorbitant prices for gas, gas for their
10 cars, to warm their houses, you know, feed their
11 children.

12 We have people talking about
13 having, you know, either estimate the cost of
14 turning off their CPAP machine at night just
15 because We Energies and their parent company, WEC
16 Energy Group, which is a Wall Street-traded group
17 wants to make more profit.

18 We have a group of people talking
19 about their dividends. Screw their dividends.
20 We got people coming into Milwaukee, robbers,
21 raiders, these landlords, slumlords like Youssef
22 Berrada; and now we have another group,
23 We Energies, that wants to rip -- you know, just
24 suck more money out of working-class,
25 lower-income people; and the most low-income

1 people are the ones paying the highest price.

2 That's ridiculous.

3 We should not be -- they should
4 not be allowed to just come into our community
5 and make money for Wall Street capitalists who
6 don't care about our kids, who don't care about
7 our future energy sources.

8 We need clean energy for our
9 future generations, not -- we shouldn't be bowing
10 down to the profits -- short-term profits for
11 We Energies' inventors and capitalists. That's
12 insane.

13 So I'll just say this. I have
14 little -- we have little hope or confidence in
15 the PSC. I mean, you've already rolled over
16 multiple times over the last year and a half with
17 things like the 21-day delay for shutting off and
18 a couple other things.

19 I'd like to say, you know, there
20 is an alternative to this instead of this
21 profit-driven utility system. It should be
22 publicly owned by the people, and the PSC should
23 be democratic and elected by the public.

24 So that's all I have to say. All
25 the organizations here, we need to tap in, come

1 together because most of -- the change is going
2 to come from us, not from this group here. Thank
3 you.

4 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks.
5 Sabine?

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1 SABINE PETERKA, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. PETERKA: Thank you for the
4 opportunity to comment.

5 I'm here to oppose the proposed
6 rate increases. As you've heard, many households
7 in Milwaukee are forced to spend high percentages
8 of their income on energy expenses. Such energy
9 burdens are especially severe in communities of
10 color and historically redlined neighborhoods.

11 The proposed rate increase by
12 We Energies will cause further hardship, which is
13 unjust and unnecessary. Instead of demanding
14 more money from residents already struggling to
15 pay bills, We Energies should be addressing the
16 disparities in energy burdens by weatherizing
17 households and helping neighborhoods with high
18 energy burdens to pay their energy bills.

19 Further, it is irresponsible of
20 We Energies to continue operating a coal power
21 plant, which has detrimental effects on public
22 health due to pollution and exacerbation of the
23 climate crisis, while asking consumers to pay
24 more every month. Please do your part to
25 ensure affordable energy for everyone. Thank

1 you.

2 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

3 Ryan Clancy is next, and Amanda

4 Payne and Pastor Dennis Beverly-Davis.

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1 RYAN CLANCY, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. CLANCY: My name is Ryan Clancy.
4 I'm the county supervisor for District 4, and I
5 want to thank the two out of the three, I
6 believe, Commissioners who are here today
7 receiving comments. I do wish that the third was
8 able to be with us today as well.

9 There is no good time for a
10 13 percent increase -- rate hike, I should call
11 it, to We Energies. But in the middle of a time
12 when people are paying more for groceries and at
13 the gas pump and rent is the absolute worst time
14 to squeeze more corporate profits out of people
15 and that's exactly what that is.

16 We Energies will tell you that
17 they want these dollars to invest in green
18 infrastructure, in solar panels and all that, but
19 this is absolutely incorrect.

20 We Energies has had the
21 opportunity over more than a decade now to invest
22 in green infrastructure like solar, and they have
23 consistently demonized the folks who actually
24 have residential solar.

25 As you heard before, the fees and

1 the ridiculously small amount that they pay for
2 residential solar to folks, then selling it just
3 a few feet away at the next home over for four
4 times that cost indicates to me that We Energies
5 is not in this to be green but to greenwash
6 things.

7 They claim credit for all that
8 green energy that they're selling to folks for
9 exorbitant prices, while they're paying the
10 people that generate it pennies in order to
11 dis-incentivize getting solar panels in the first
12 place.

13 We Energies exists to deliver
14 profits to their shareholders, not power to the
15 people, and it's important to understand that;
16 and it's important to understand that there are
17 alternatives to that.

18 If We Energies wants to be green,
19 if they were actually concerned about the
20 environment, they'd start encouraging
21 residential solar instead of stamping it out. If
22 We Energies was concerned about residents, they'd
23 roll back this rate hike, which I am clearly
24 opposed to.

25 And if they cared less about

1 shareholder profits and more about providing
2 inexpensive reliable power to the people, they'd
3 invite offers to become a publicly-owned
4 municipal power company. Thank you.

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Okay. Thanks.

6 Amanda Payne? Pastor Denise
7 Beverly-Davis after that, and Estella Grant-Dixon
8 after that.

9 Is Amanda Payne here? Is that
10 you?

11 MS. BEVERLY-DAVIS: I'm Pastor
12 Beverly-Davis.

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1 DENISE BEVERLY-DAVIS, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. BEVERLY-DAVIS: I had my lights
4 turned off --

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: You need your
6 microphone.

7 MS. BEVERLY-DAVIS: Thank you, sweetie.
8 And by the way, you're good-looking.

9 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks. I'll take a
10 positive comment. I'll take it. Keep it on the
11 record. There you go.

12 MS. BEVERLY-DAVIS: He's a youngster
13 for me. I'm 74, turning 75 in January. But
14 anyway, I came up here for something else, but
15 God knows what you need.

16 I had my lights, for the first
17 time in my life, turned off this April, I think,
18 when they turn them off because I was paying --
19 my church is in the inner city down here on
20 Vliet; and we chose to come down here to be a
21 help to the community, and we did just that.

22 They turned them off, and I was
23 sitting there in the cold freezing and plus I
24 have respiratory problems, and my daughter
25 called. I don't -- I can't imagine what she's

1 said to We Energies, but she gave them an
2 ultimatum.

3 I feel that if you a senior
4 citizen, your doohickey should never be turned
5 off and especially if you on a fixed income.
6 That's my thinking.

7 I know everybody's not like me,
8 but I pay my bills. I have never in my life not
9 paid it, but I chose between my church and
10 between my home because money was bad, if you
11 understand what I mean, because me and my husband
12 are worldwide preachers. I been all over the
13 world helping people, and I just didn't think
14 they would turn a senior citizen's thingamado
15 off.

16 So I think that the government
17 need to look at that amongst every race of
18 people. I know my skin is black, but I'm very
19 mixed; and when I say every white, black and
20 all in between, because I have four races sitting
21 in this little sawed-off body. Amen? Oh, I'm
22 not in church. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do
23 that.

24 And I just feel if you worked hard
25 and you paid your dues, something should be given

1 to the senior citizens, especially when they are
2 not -- I don't get 2,000 a month of this or
3 that -- I mean, not 2,000 -- \$2 million a month
4 and all this and that.

5 My Social Security is 2,000 a
6 month. So out of that, I have to pay my house
7 note. Okay? And then what you got left? You
8 understand? Then I got gotta pay my car note.

9 See, I don't think We Energies --
10 I been praying a long time before this ever
11 happened to me for another energy company to come
12 in here and give them some competition. They
13 need some competition, and then maybe they
14 wouldn't be so ugly. That's the best word to say
15 it.

16 Because I traveled this whole
17 world; and to see what I've seen overseas and
18 Mexico and Africa, even down in Haiti and all
19 over the world, United States is blessed, but
20 I've seen the worst.

21 And I just think it's ludicrous, I
22 really do; and for the first time in my life at
23 74 years old, which I have never not paid my
24 bills, but I made a sacrifice for my church
25 because -- you don't have to believe the way I

1 have, but I know he's real cuz I been up there.

2 I'm for senior citizens in all
3 capacity. Whether they're rich or poor, I
4 believe they should be a separate thing,
5 especially if you're poor and have paid their
6 dues, see.

7 I collect my husband's, a little
8 bit of my Social Security. You know how it is
9 when you got a good husband -- now wait a minute.

10 You know how it is when you got a
11 good husband, and he do the workin', and you know
12 what I'm trying to say, and you stay at home?
13 You know what I'm saying? And all that kind of
14 stuff.

15 Well, I had to split his because
16 he was married before he married me. I just feel
17 like I shouldn't have been sitting there like
18 this shaking and with my coat on on the inside,
19 and I never experienced nothing so horrible in my
20 life; and my daughter who lives in Texas happened
21 to call, and I told her what was going on because
22 I'm not a complainer.

23 And before that day was out, I
24 guess she made them an offer they couldn't refuse
25 because a lot of senior citizens are like me.

1 They have problems. I have upper respiratory
2 problems. I could have a heart attack, stroke.
3 I could have an asthma attack, all kinds of
4 things.

5 But yet, We Energies didn't care.
6 They didn't care. They just cut it off, and
7 Mrs. -- because I still claim my husband as my
8 husband. Mrs. Beverly-Davis always pay her
9 bills, and I believe most of the people would. I
10 know there's some that won't.

11 But God bless you and thank you,
12 and whoever don't like it, talk to him.

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

14 Estella Grant-Dixon.

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1 ESTELLA GRANT-DIXON, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. GRANT-DIXON: Listen. I feel like
4 this is ludicrous up in here, that we shouldn't
5 have to be having this conversation whatsoever,
6 seeing that people are -- have died and died; and
7 many people have died these last couple of years
8 with this pandemic.

9 Now we come back, and you're not
10 hitting my life. You're hitting my pocket, so I
11 can try and take care of my -- I can't take care
12 of my business because of the fact that there's
13 so much going on here with this. Y'all want more
14 of what I have, and I don't have it. They don't
15 have it. Did you hear all these people talking,
16 this conversation? We all have the same
17 conversation. I don't understand it. I just
18 don't because it's disrespectful. It's
19 disregarding.

20 Lord Jesus, it's disheartening.
21 What in the world are we doing? We not thinking
22 about nobody but ourselves, me, me, me, me, me.
23 What you say, shareholders? Ain't nobody
24 sharing nothing with me. Ain't nobody giving me
25 a thing.

1 So I need to understand how is
2 it that you could just take what I got without
3 even giving me notice of it? And I'm speaking to
4 you and your entity of where you at right now
5 because I haven't got a letter from none of
6 y'all that stated that you was gonna take and put
7 a 13 percent -- or even 6.5 percent, 6.9 percent,
8 whatever it was -- I didn't get a letter. I
9 didn't get a notice. I didn't get no
10 understanding on that.

11 They just did what they did, and I
12 looked up and I got a bill that was a little bit
13 bigger than what it was supposed to be, and I had
14 to pay it or my stuff was gonna go off.

15 I take care of disabled people.
16 You understand? And I have to do things that I
17 wouldn't normally do which is turn on my stove to
18 warm up my house because it was so cold last year
19 that we froze in my house.

20 My landlord had no regard. Okay?
21 And I feel like y'all are not having no regard
22 either, looking at your faces, looking at the
23 people. That's just so disrespectful. It is so
24 disheartening. I don't have a color problem with
25 anybody, but y'all make a person start looking

1 kinda strange because it's not necessary. Should
2 nobody, not near 60, 50, 40-some-year-old, and
3 these young women are out here trying to work and
4 take care of they children.

5 But we talk about the seniors for
6 just a second. Okay? That's disrespectful.
7 They've worked hard, hard to try and keep a roof
8 over they kids' houses and food in their mouths,
9 and now you gonna snatch out the little bit they
10 got. The decency, it's like you're taking that
11 away. You know, because I mean, that's so rude,
12 man.

13 I've looked at the faces of the
14 people that are sitting in these chairs. Ain't
15 y'all don't give one rat's ass. That's so sad.
16 Because your pocket is doing good, but not the
17 people who need it. You not giving nobody
18 nothing. We work for everything we got. And to
19 just sit back and have no regard, just like it's
20 okay.

21 I mean, the people who were behind
22 me, I mean no disrespect to anyone, but they were
23 rude, and then you tell me not to say nothing and
24 don't clap my hands. Okay? That was a form of
25 disrespect to me. Okay? And you sat here with a

1 smile on your face for the majority of this whole
2 thing, and I don't see nothing funny.

3 MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Estella, he the
4 Judge.

5 MS. GRANT-DIXON: It's rude.

6 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Let her speak.
7 She -- let her speak.

8 MS. GRANT-DIXON: I'm not being rude to
9 you. I'm trying to tell you how I feel.

10 EXAMINER NEWMARK: I understand. Go
11 ahead.

12 MS. GRANT-DIXON: At the same time, I'm
13 looking at all these people that are just asking
14 for some assistance. They not asking you to go
15 in your pocket. We asking y'all to fight these
16 people for us because that's what you're supposed
17 to do, right? I mean, am I correct?

18 See, I don't know exactly how this
19 thing goes, but I know that I supposed to go to
20 you, to you, to do what I need done. So that's
21 how this done, right? Am I correct? Making
22 sure? Okay.

23 It's supposed to be a
24 consideration for us, and I don't see any. I
25 just don't. I'm sorry if I'm being rude. I'm

1 sorry, dear, if I was disrespectful. I

2 apologize. But wrong is wrong, and two left

3 shoes ain't gonna make it right.

4 So again, I apologize if I was out

5 of order, but I feel like y'all out of order.

6 Have a good night.

7 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks.

8 Keviea Guiden and then Cassie

9 Steiner and Barbara Coyle, and that's all the

10 appearance slips I have. So are there any more

11 in the back there? Anyone else fill out a slip?

12 No. Okay.

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1 KEVIEA GUIDEN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. GUIDEN: Good afternoon, everybody.
4 I am Keviea Guiden with Citizen Action North Side
5 Rising. I am here with a few of my colleagues
6 from Walnut Way, Sierra Club. I do believe we do
7 have Clean Wisconsin here; and if I'm missing
8 someone, I want to say I totally apologize.

9 We are totally addressing
10 We Energies, but I am coming here today to talk
11 about me energies. We are looking for energy
12 affordable for us. We need We Energies to
13 understand that we weren't put in these places by
14 mistake. We were strategically put in these
15 areas, which would be in the City of Milwaukee.
16 We were redlined.

17 So these redlined neighborhoods,
18 these redlined communities, these disparate
19 communities, these low-income communities, these
20 impoverished communities which my black people
21 live in and also our brown Latina families as
22 well in southeastern Wisconsin, I mean, for the
23 We Energies facility over at Oak Creek to know
24 and to understand that they are still burning
25 fossil fuel and coal, which is also affecting

1 families in medical ways.

2 Folks are having health issues, as
3 the pastor that just was sitting here stated, and
4 a few other folks. We're experiencing these type
5 of medical issues because of what they're putting
6 into the climate. Keep in mind we're damaging
7 the climate.

8 I mean, I'm not for sure if
9 We Energies is understanding that we are in
10 global warming times, you know? We've got folks
11 across the United States of America who is
12 fighting and moving towards clean energy. We
13 rank No. 36 in the nation as far as moving and
14 coming up, moving towards clean energy and
15 improving our climate because of what's
16 happening.

17 Keep in mind with the global
18 warming, things are heatin' up. I heard a young
19 lady talking about tree canopy as well. Well,
20 there's Grade A neighborhoods, and there's
21 Grade D neighborhoods. Okay? We're the Grade D
22 neighborhoods. So there's a lot of places
23 getting hotter in the Grade D neighborhoods
24 versus the Grade A.

25 But what I'm gonna go back

1 onto is that by us being redlined, we already
2 know these are the less desirable
3 neighborhoods. These houses, as the ladies and
4 gentlemen stated earlier, are over a hundred
5 years old. These houses are not insulated.
6 They're not weatherized. So there's this --
7 what is it called? A program, since we're
8 talkin' about programs, a weatherization
9 program.

10 Well, y'all, send the money over
11 to SDC, the Social Development Commission. SDC
12 is looking for workers to work. Okay? So if we
13 only have one and two, which would be SDC and
14 also Community Advocates. Those are the two --
15 only two avenues that We Energies has looked into
16 for these programs.

17 Keep in mind, you can make \$23
18 over the low-income rate, you know, the budget
19 that they're saying to be able to be eligible
20 for these programs; and if you're \$23 over, you
21 can't make it. So now you're looking at a person
22 that look like me or, you know, what I'm gettin'
23 at is I just recently experienced an energy
24 burden.

25 I just gonna tell y'all. I make

1 okay money. I don't have small children. My two
2 children are grown, but they're still at home.
3 With that being said, there's three people in a
4 household. I do own my house as well. There are
5 also no programs for homeowners as well.

6 But they cut my stuff off
7 August 5th, the magic number \$600. Okay? \$600.
8 Where did I just get \$600 from in just a little
9 over a year? An organization fire me for no
10 reason, but I didn't fight it, but I'm in a
11 better position now.

12 So I was livin' off of my
13 savings, a small amount of savings. I got a
14 shopping problem, so it wasn't a lot of money.
15 Okay? That's August 5th. Four weeks later,
16 September 7 [descriptive sound], I'm working.
17 I'm at a new job. I'm in a panic state. Okay?

18 I can't turn on my Internet. I
19 can't access the Wi-Fi. So guess what? Of
20 course I was able to get it back on August 5th.
21 But come September 7th, this is four weeks later,
22 so 32 days -- that's why I'm gonna give it four
23 weeks later.

24 32 days later, I was shut off
25 again. Guess what's the next magic number? 600

1 again. Keep in mind, y'all, my bill is not --
2 I'm not behind in my bill. My bill's not even
3 11, \$1,200. Okay?
4 12 days later -- and I apologize
5 for making this up -- making this about me today
6 because I am the energy burden organizer; but if
7 I'm not living it, I can't tell you about it. I
8 can't fight about the story if I ain't never
9 lived it, and this is what's happening, and this
10 is what's going on.

11 So September 7, that's 32 days
12 later, they cut it off again, 600 more dollars.
13 Imma tell y'all, less than 12 -- less than two
14 weeks, which was September 19th, I had another
15 letter threatening disconnection notice with a
16 bill that might I mind you, this hasn't even been
17 30 days. This was 12 days, not even two weeks.
18 Current charges of \$189, like where is the
19 billing cycle?

20 So with that being said, I'm gonna
21 need for We Energies to understand and to know
22 that this type of behavior, this type of foolery,
23 this foolishness is totally not acceptable. I
24 come here today to speak to -- and be a voice for
25 people of my community, for our BIPOC communities

1 and allowing us to know that we do not have to
2 accept this.

3 13 percent? What about folks that
4 are on low-income? What about folks that have
5 small children? What about folks that can't get
6 on the Internet or don't have access? Everybody
7 is not tech savvy -- tech savvy. Let me get it
8 together.

9 With that being said, we are here
10 to fight for our lives. We will not stop, and
11 our voices will be heard. Okay? We --
12 everybody wanna say, which is true, is that
13 We Energies is a government monopolized, you
14 know, entity. I just want y'all to know, they
15 not playing monopoly; they playing chess.
16 Okay?

17 I heard about pimpin', I heard
18 y'all know about pimpin'. They said poverty
19 pimpin'. To me, it's the new space age pimpin'.
20 Okay? So what we need to do is understand that a
21 lot of folks' incomes not going up. Minimum wage
22 is \$7.25, We Energies. Okay? I don't know
23 nobody who can pay a \$280 budget bill making
24 \$7.25.

25 We have mothers and fathers that's

1 working two and three jobs who are barely at home
2 with children. So now you takin' me out of a
3 home from my children while I'm out of the home,
4 and I'm trying to make a way to live for my
5 children. My kids gotta be at home without
6 lights or my kids can't have gas to keep warm?
7 These houses are not insulated because of how old
8 they are.

9 So if you guys want to do
10 something, We Energies, invest in our despaired
11 communities, our underserved communities. Okay?
12 Stop saying that we are giving to, like they
13 said, Montessori schools or Mount Mary Colleges.
14 Like where do we start thinking about the little
15 people? Where do we start thinking about the
16 low-income people?

17 You know, ain't nobody big, but
18 I'm just saying why keep -- why keep oppressing a
19 community, communities of color, our BIPOC
20 communities when we already depressed --
21 oppressed. Oppressed, not depressed.

22 But depression's coming, you know.
23 Like they just said, we just come out of a
24 pandemic. Folks are doing more drugs, folks are
25 drinking more alcohol. I mean, that's forms of

1 depression. Folks are now going to -- you know,
2 if you are having enough sense or have some folks
3 to help you, I'm sure that the mental health
4 institutes -- this plays on a mental level as
5 well.

6 Now, I could keep talking and
7 talking about a lot of things that are very
8 important to me. But keep in mind, too,
9 Milwaukee has unclean water, lead-based pipes,
10 but we are here so I'm just saying these are
11 things that we're faced with in our oppressed
12 communities. Okay?

13 And I also with housing. There's
14 no cap on housing. Okay? So where do we get
15 time to take out and have a good time with our
16 kids? Where do we get to go out and take our
17 kids to the movies? If I gotta pay the electric
18 and gas bill, I can't take my kids to the movies.
19 I can't even afford gas to go to that one or
20 two-day free day at the zoo that Maria was
21 talking about earlier.

22 But I'm going to stop talking,
23 y'all, but I just want y'all to know, we ain't
24 stoppin'. This fight is not over, and I'm
25 gonna need for y'all to understand, We Energies,

1 that it should be about a me energy, make
2 energies affordable now for me and my people.
3 Thank you.

4 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks.

5 Cassie Steiner.

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1 CASSIE STEINER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. STEINER: Hi. My name is Cassie
4 Steiner, and I am a staff member with an advocacy
5 organization that works on clean energy, the
6 Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter.

7 I am testifying on behalf of
8 myself today. First, I really want to thank
9 those of you who are here today and sharing your
10 stories, especially those who are testifying for
11 the first time.

12 I know that public speaking is the
13 biggest fear that anyone can have, and so to come
14 up here and share your story, especially when a
15 decision maker isn't your race and then to talk
16 about money challenges, which are often taboo
17 takes a lot of bravery. So thank you for being
18 here and facing an intimidating process.

19 I want to agree with what a lot of
20 folks have said today who are opposing the rate
21 increase and for sharing the very real impact
22 that this will have on ratepayers. These are not
23 exaggerated stories. For some folks this really
24 is a matter of life and death, of health care, of
25 feeding their kids.

1 As Keviea and I have been tabling
2 across the community, we're hearing again and
3 again that the assistance programs that
4 We Energies has are not enough, they're not
5 accessible. When people call they're not getting
6 answers, and people are being told that
7 assistance programs are different. It's not a
8 consistent process that's accessible to folks;
9 and so even if those were enough to fix the
10 problem, which they're not, the process is not
11 working.

12 The root of the problem here is
13 that houses are inefficient, and bills are too
14 high; and those do not get addressed by bill
15 assistance paying programs.

16 I don't live in Milwaukee, so a
17 lot of what I'm going to talk about now is about
18 this clean energy transition that We Energies is
19 claiming they're paying for with this rate
20 increase. It is so untrue. We are not seeing
21 We Energies commit to clean energy.

22 In a recent report Sierra Club put
23 out called The Dirty Truth, We Energies got a
24 failing grade on their transition plans to clean
25 energy. They're lagging behind on clean energy

1 even neighboring Midwest states and other
2 utilities in the state.

3 And in recent PSC dockets that you
4 all have voted on, We Energies has announced
5 plans to continue to operate coal plants and have
6 pushed forward things like liquefied natural gas
7 storage facilities and the WEC RICE units,
8 doubling down on fossil fuels like gas, despite
9 opposition in those dockets and intervenors
10 asking for solutions like energy efficiency
11 programs and clean energy and demand management
12 instead of fossil gas.

13 We've heard from you,
14 Commissioner Valcq, that we can't just ask people
15 to be more efficient. That won't solve the
16 problem. That won't be reliable enough.

17 But what we're hearing today is
18 a systematic ask for an energy efficiency
19 program that addresses historically redlined
20 areas and neighborhoods with high energy burden,
21 not just asking white folks like me to turn off
22 my lights when I leave a room. We actually need
23 to change the infrastructure of these aging
24 homes. This coordinated programming is what's
25 essential to fix this and to lower rates and

1 improve our infrastructure. It is a climate
2 solution.

3 Folks in this room and throughout
4 the We Energies territory should not have to pay
5 for We Energies' historic poor decisions and poor
6 investments that negatively impact health and
7 climate.

8 We Energies' rate increase should
9 not be approved. Energy efficiency and demand
10 management should be prioritized both to lower
11 bills and carbon emissions and in support of
12 Walnut Way's asks for a community benefits
13 agreement. Energy burden disparities,
14 especially across racial lines, must be
15 addressed.

16 I'm thankful that the two of you
17 are here today to listen to these testimonies in
18 person, that's so important. And I really hope
19 that the two of you will uphold the
20 administration's commitment to clean energy,
21 climate action and racial and economic justice
22 that we've heard this administration say that
23 they have. Thank you.

24 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

25 So Barbara Coyle, she originally

1 said she'd like to speak, but then it looks like
2 on the form that she might have changed her mind.

3 So just wanted to check, is Barbara Coyle here?

4 No? How about Amanda Payne? No. Okay.

5 That's all the slips I have. So

6 at this point, we're going to break. We're going

7 to reconvene at 6:00 p.m. So I'm going to shut

8 this off quickly so we can take a break and come

9 back at 6:00. Thanks very much for attending.

10 (Proceedings adjourned until 6:00 p.m.)

11 * * * * *

12 6:00 p.m.

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Our first person

14 here is Jim Paetsch. It looks like

15 P-r-e-t-s-c-h.

16 MR. PAETSCH: Paetsch.

17 EXAMINER NEWMARK: I would never have

18 gotten that; apologize for that. So have a seat,

19 please, and I will give you the microphone in a

20 sec.

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1 JIM PAETSCH, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. PAETSCH: Good evening. My name is
4 Jim Paetsch. I'm the executive director for the
5 Milwaukee 7, which is a nonprofit that serves as
6 the economic development entity for all of
7 southeastern Wisconsin. I'm not here to
8 comment directly on the rate case but want to
9 make you aware of the work that we do with
10 We Energies.

11 So since our founding in 2005,
12 We Energies has been a key strategic partner in
13 our effort to grow the economy in southeastern
14 Wisconsin. Working together with our private
15 and public sector partners, we have
16 successfully closed 120 corporate attraction and
17 expansion projects all across the region. Those
18 projects account for 27,000 jobs and have
19 leveraged more than 3.4 billion in capital
20 investment.

21 I'm especially pleased to report
22 that the average wage for those jobs is more
23 than 20 percent above the regional average.
24 These are jobs that enable our residents to
25 support their families and gain access to the

1 American dream.

2 Whether it be companies like
3 German gummy bear producer Haribo, which is
4 putting the finishing touches on the \$350 million
5 factory in Pleasant Prairie; mining equipment
6 maker Komatsu, which cut the ribbon earlier this
7 year on its new \$285 million global mining
8 headquarters and production facility here in
9 Milwaukee; or Milwaukee Tool, which has created
10 nearly 3,000 jobs in our region since the late
11 2000s, we're proud that the collaborative work
12 we've done with our partners is keeping the
13 Milwaukee region globally competitive and
14 providing career opportunities for our residents
15 which keeps the entire regional economy humming.

16 We Energies is a vested and lead
17 partner in our efforts and has been with the
18 Milwaukee 7 every step of the way. They have not
19 only been a generous financial supporter of our
20 organization, but have provided board leadership
21 and strategic direction for our many efforts.

22 It's unusual for a week to go by
23 that I'm not talking directly to somebody at
24 We Energies about a project or initiative that
25 would bring jobs and capital investment to our

1 region.

2 We are grateful for the steadfast
3 partnership we have with We Energies, which is
4 helping to keep the economy in southeastern
5 Wisconsin humming in a dynamic and competitive
6 landscape. Thank you.

7 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks
8 for your comment.

9 I'm going to read a couple names
10 here so you know you're on deck. So Samantha
11 April Doucas, Robert Penner and Hayden Harwood.

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1 SAMANTHA APRIL DOUCAS, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. DOUCAS: Thank you. My name is
4 Samantha April Doucas. I'm a member of the Party
5 for Socialism and Liberation. I'm urging the
6 Public Service Commission to deny We Energies'
7 request to hike up energy rates by 13 percent in
8 2023.

9 They claim this hike is needed to
10 complete the transition and support the
11 transition to green energy. In reality, they
12 only are charging more so that they can, you
13 know, compensate themselves for having to pay off
14 the loan on the coal -- closed coal plants.

15 In reality, there's no intent
16 directly to actually transition to cleaner
17 energy, simply for them to line their pockets so
18 they don't have to take the burden of paying that
19 extra money on the interest for the loans on the
20 coal plant.

21 They aren't actually interested in
22 supporting green energy. They're only interested
23 in their bottom line. And they're using us, the
24 people of the city, of the county, of the state,
25 so that they don't have to eat the cost. They're

1 passing off the cost to us.

2 You know what's already too
3 expensive, what costs already too much? Our
4 housing bills. Our energy bill as it is costs
5 too much. Our food, which is subject to crazy
6 inflation right now, already too high. We can't
7 afford another rate hike from We Energies when
8 they make profits from what should be a public
9 utility. It should not be in the hands of a
10 private company.

11 Energy is a human right, and it's
12 a necessity for life. It should not be privately
13 owned so that companies like this can take
14 advantage of the people of Milwaukee.

15 So I urge the Public Service
16 Commission -- I urge the Commission not to
17 accept this rate hike and tell We Energies to
18 take care of it themselves. They've made enough
19 profits off of us for decades, and they can
20 easily manage an extra 13 percent for their coal
21 plant closing.

22 It's not a burden for them to take
23 on. They should easily take it on. And frankly,
24 people should own the energy production in this
25 country so we can decide easier how to transition

1 to green energy, a future we all need. It should
2 be in our hands to decide, not a private company
3 like We Energies. Thank you.

4 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks.

5 All right. Robert Penner.

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1 ROBERT PENNER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. PENNER: Thanks, y'all. My name is
4 Robert Penner. I'm from the Milwaukee Autonomous
5 Tenants Union. We're an organization here in
6 Milwaukee that fights to decommmodify housing and
7 to help people stay in their homes, avoid
8 eviction, and fight back against landlords who
9 are trying to evict them.

10 And we see all across the city
11 that people are experiencing a very, very
12 difficult time affording their housing. Rent is
13 going up, up, up, even for the poorest and
14 especially for the poorest people here in the
15 city of Milwaukee. Rent's going up and also for
16 homeowners, your mortgages are going up, your
17 interest rates are going up. Your property taxes
18 are going up.

19 So how do they think -- how does
20 We Energies think people, especially the poorest
21 people and, let's be frank, people of color here
22 in the city of Milwaukee can afford a 13 percent
23 increase in the energy bills. It's not -- we
24 can't -- we can't do it. It's not affordable.

25 It's not practical to be pushing

1 these costs off onto the poorest, most oppressed
2 people in this city. It's already hard enough
3 for them. I also don't just want to speak out
4 against the rate hike. I want to speak out
5 against the concept of We Energies as a whole,
6 the entire concept of --

7 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Off the record.

8 (Discussion off the record.)

9 EXAMINER NEWMARK: So go ahead.

10 MR. PENNER: Yeah. Give me the jazz
11 hands.

12 So the entire concept of
13 We Energies, you know, I want to speak for
14 decommodify energy, for energy that is publicly
15 owned, that is free for every single person,
16 right, in this society.

17 People deserve to live a dignified
18 life in a safe, free house with free energy with
19 everything that they need to live a dignified
20 life, and that means essentially no We Energies.
21 Energy should be public. It should be free. It
22 should be totally decommodified.

23 So, you know, we're out here.
24 The Milwaukee Autonomous Tenants Union is out
25 here advocating not just for free housing and

1 the abolition of landlordism, we're speaking for
2 the apposition of We Energies and the total
3 knocking down of the structures of corporate
4 control of energy. We don't need it, it is
5 unnecessary; and our society would be a lot
6 better off if we did not have We Energies, if we
7 had control over this.

8 You know, to finish up here, I
9 don't think -- I don't know what they think
10 they're going to achieve by pushing people
11 further and further and further to the brink of
12 poverty. What do you think you're going to
13 achieve by pushing people out of their homes, by
14 forcing people to live in homes without energy,
15 without lights?

16 I talked on the phone today with a
17 woman that had her electricity turned off, and
18 she can't afford to pay rent and to pay
19 electricity. We go door to door in buildings
20 owned by Youssef Berrada, Berrada Property
21 Management; and people have extension cords
22 running across the hall in other apartments just
23 so that they can keep their fridge on because
24 they can't afford to pay rent and pay for energy
25 at the same time. It's outrageous.

1 And you know, when it comes down
2 to it, if you keep pushing people, if We Energies
3 keeps pushing people, people aren't gonna take it
4 anymore. We're not -- you know, we're not gonna
5 take it anymore.

6 We are the ones that create all
7 the value in society. We are the ones that make
8 the machines run and make the factories run and
9 produce every ounce of wealth in this society,
10 not them; and they sure as hell need us, but we
11 don't need them. We don't need corporatists, we
12 don't need capitalists, we don't need
13 politicians, we don't need bureaucrats, none of
14 them. We make this society run, and we'll make
15 it run for ourselves if necessary.

16 So to finish up, they better
17 watch out. We Energies better watch out because
18 if you push people to the brink, then we're
19 gonna go over the edge for you. All right.
20 Thank you.

21 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks
22 for your comment.

23 Hayden Harwood.

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1 HAYDEN HARWOOD, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. HARWOOD: Hi, everyone.

4 So jumping off of what my comrade,
5 Robert, was just saying. My name is Hayden. I'm
6 a member of the Party for Socialism and
7 Liberation and also MATU.

8 I am the kid of someone who worked
9 at We Energies. So I know firsthand that their
10 workers do not get the benefits that they're
11 saying, you know, that they'll be getting with
12 this price hike -- with this rate hike.

13 I just wanted to expand a little
14 bit and say that the workers that actually make
15 the plants run -- I called my father a welder.
16 He was an engineer. And he came home tired,
17 back-broken, sitting in 105-degree heat in
18 welding tanks covered head-to-toe with gear,
19 mandatory overtime; and this is all stuff that
20 sounds like, you know, that's like, oh, it's not
21 that bad, but it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be
22 something that we don't even blink an eye at.

23 Same thing with things like
24 13 percent hikes to the energy costs. Energy --
25 we, the workers, make this energy. We, the

1 workers, are the ones who are keeping these
2 factories running. We are the ones that keep
3 society running, and we need to take our power
4 back.

5 So that being said, I am obviously
6 against the rate hikes. Energy, water, all of
7 the utilities, housing should absolutely be in
8 the hands of people, not for profit. So people
9 over profits.

10 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

11 Erica Steib, then Mark Borkowski,
12 and Kathy Thornton-Bias.

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1 ERICA STEIB, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. STEIB: Hi, everyone. My name is
4 Erica Steib, and I am a member of the Party for
5 Socialism and Liberation.

6 I'm here as well to urge the
7 Public Service Commission to deny We Energies the
8 ability to increase our energy bills by
9 13 percent. So like others have said,
10 We Energies is claiming that this increase is
11 necessary to support the transition to green
12 energy, and this is completely absurd given the
13 fact that they make millions of dollars in profit
14 every single year.

15 They earn the highest profits of
16 all the utilities in the state; and in fact,
17 they are among the top-performing utilities on
18 Wall Street. They are proposing this rate
19 increase to pay off the loan on the coal plants
20 that will soon be shut down; and so they're
21 essentially making us regular people pay off
22 their debt, and I don't think we should have to
23 do that.

24 Wisconsin workers are already
25 being squeezed by record high inflation, we all

1 know this. It's harder than ever to pay the
2 rent, to keep the roof over our heads, keep food
3 on the table, put gas in the car; and there's
4 just no reason that anyone should have to choose
5 between keeping the lights on or eating.

6 A 13 percent increase on our
7 energy bills will certainly cascade into more and
8 more crises, including homelessness, health
9 issues and desperation. This burden is certain
10 to be heaviest on our black and brown neighbors
11 who already deal with higher energy costs due to
12 inadequate housing. And this is completely
13 unacceptable. There is no reason for this in a
14 country like this where we have all of these
15 resources, and people are still struggling to get
16 by.

17 So we must demand what is
18 essential for our communities to survive and
19 thrive. We also should reject the idea that we
20 the people should be the ones to foot the bill
21 for the switch to green energy to save our
22 planet. We were not the ones who created the
23 climate crisis.

24 We need the swift climate action
25 from monopolies like We Energies immediately,

1 and they should be the ones to foot the bill.
2 They have massive wealth, and they can cover the
3 cost.

4 Our planet is completely
5 priceless. So we need to make the banks and
6 monopolies pay for the solutions that will save
7 the planet. Power production should be to meet
8 the needs of the people and the planet, not the
9 needs of Wall Street utilities and their
10 shareholders.

11 So Public Service Commission, I
12 implore you to listen to the people and reject
13 this increase. And to everyone else in this
14 meeting, I really want to encourage you to unite
15 and fight together with your neighbors, with
16 other grassroots organizations because it's not
17 going to be We Energies or the Public Service
18 Commission or any of these institutions to grant
19 us the liberation that we need.

20 I dream of a future without energy
21 bills when common goods like energy are owned and
22 controlled by the people and not a tiny handful
23 of millionaires. We need power for the people
24 and not profit. Thank you.

25 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

1 Okay. Mark Borkowski and Kathy
2 Thornton-Bias. After Kathy, Tiffany Stark.

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1 MARK BORKOWSKI, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. BORKOWSKI: Hi, good evening.

4 First of all, thank you for having this hearing.

5 I am Mark Borkowski. My regular
6 job is I'm a member of the Milwaukee Common
7 Council. I'm Alderman Mark Borkowski from the
8 11th Aldermanic District.

9 I'm here today for two reasons.
10 I'm here today for myself, and I'm here today for
11 my constituents. I'm not part of any
12 organization. Okay? And I respect those views,
13 whatever, but I am here because I consider myself
14 an average person. Okay? And I represent a lot
15 of average people.

16 And from a humanistic standpoint,
17 regardless of rationale, 13 percent increase on
18 anything, on anything is outrageous, okay,
19 regardless of where the money supposedly is going
20 or whatever, whatever.

21 In this time in our era right now
22 with inflation, the cost of food and cost of
23 gasoline, struggling families are not only
24 struggling, but they're struggling even more; and
25 they will continue to struggle if we go to

1 13 percent.

2 Now, as an elected official -- and
3 I served both on the Milwaukee County Board and
4 now, as I said, the Milwaukee Common Council --
5 there are caps on us as people who vote on your
6 tax levy as to how high we can increase your
7 taxes, and we are limited to about 2.5 percent.

8 Now, I think most reasonable
9 people, most average people would say 2.5 percent
10 increase is manageable. Okay? Government can do
11 it. Everybody else should also do it. I'm not
12 going to get into the whole monopoly thing.
13 Okay? That's not the issue here tonight.

14 But let me tell you, if
15 We Energies had elected officials, okay, like I'm
16 an elected official, like I'm held accountable as
17 I should be with my votes, with my votes, whether
18 or not you should reelect me or not, I am held
19 accountable.

20 The problem with monopolies is
21 that nobody gets held accountable. Okay? And so
22 that's another reason why I'm begging, I'm
23 begging, 13 percent is too much, and it's not
24 affordable.

25 We have to find a way to make it

1 more livable and possible; and that's why I'm
2 here for the average people because there's too
3 many haves and have-nots, and that chasm is
4 getting too great. Thank you.

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

6 Kathy Thornton-Bias. Tiffany
7 Stark, and it looks like LaDette Austin.

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1 KATHY THORNTON-BIAS, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. THORNTON-BIAS: Good evening. My
4 name is Kathy Thornton-Bias, and I serve as the
5 president and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of
6 Greater Milwaukee.

7 The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater
8 Milwaukee has helped local kids and teens since
9 1887, when we founded our organization in the
10 basement of Plymouth Church on Milwaukee's East
11 Side.

12 Today, we are the largest
13 youth-serving agency in the city of Milwaukee,
14 and we've grown to be one of the largest boys &
15 girls clubs in the entire country. Every day we
16 see thousands of Milwaukee's youth streaming
17 through our doors and participating in academic
18 and recreational programs.

19 We provide safety, we provide
20 support due to the critical hours of the day as
21 well as meals, strong adult role models, and
22 organized activities which our kids oftentimes
23 don't get otherwise.

24 At the clubs, there's always a way
25 for kids to get involved and learn something new.

1 None of this work would be possible without the
2 commitment of our 750 full-time and part-time
3 employees, our passionate volunteers, and
4 dedicated corporate sponsors like We Energies.

5 For many years, we introduced how
6 to support the clubs and our camp allowing some
7 of Milwaukee's most underprivileged and
8 under-resourced children to get access to the
9 things that they need.

10 Additionally, we benefit from
11 having employees from the We Energies
12 organization and the leadership on our board of
13 trustees giving us wise counsel and advice when
14 needed. Thank you.

15 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

16 Tiffany Stark, and then, like I
17 said, LaDette Austin and Natalie Wasek.

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1 TIFFANY STARK, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. STARK: Hello, everyone. Thank you
4 for having us. I am Tiffany Stark, and I am a
5 social worker and a community advocate. I work
6 on the front lines. I work with people that are
7 low income and I work with people that aren't.

8 Every year it's gotten worse and
9 worse, and inflation is going up, and people are
10 struggling to figure out how they're going to pay
11 all these bills. It's to the point where you'd
12 have to choose, as other people were saying, over
13 food, over lights, over rent; and it's becoming
14 more and more stressful, especially we have to
15 also look at the mental health aspect.

16 A lot of people are struggling
17 with their mental health because of all these
18 stressors, not knowing what to do and how they're
19 going to pay these bills. It also causes
20 physical, medical issues as well that a lot of
21 people don't think about.

22 And the question is where are
23 these people going to get the money? We Energies
24 may say, oh, yeah, there's energy assistance,
25 come on down, we can help you. Even with energy

1 assistance, you have to understand the formula;
2 and they go by a lot of times what you make
3 before taxes and not what you actually bring
4 home, and then you don't qualify.

5 Also, with all of the increases,
6 even with the energy -- or sorry -- doesn't mean
7 you're going to be able to afford all of these
8 bills. So we need to really think about the
9 struggles that people are having.

10 Also, I will say that I'm upset
11 with the legislators because you have to look at
12 this. We Energies is the only person or company
13 in this state. There is no competition. We
14 don't have a choice. We're screwed no matter
15 what they want to do to you because they're the
16 only person -- or the only company in this state.

17 It's kind of like the TV
18 situation. You have two options, and you get
19 screwed, and you gotta play the game of going
20 back and forth. It's the same thing. We don't
21 have any options. And the legislators need to
22 bring in more competition in the state so we have
23 choices. Then We Energies will start making some
24 differences when they know there's a competition
25 and that there's gonna be people that, you know,

1 may be giving other -- their residents, consumers
2 a better rate.

3 Also, people are on the budget;
4 and every year they're like, Oh, yeah, the
5 budget's coming, and oh, yeah, it's gonna be
6 cold, it's gonna be really warm. So we need to
7 raise your budget up. Okay. Well, we're doing
8 that already, and now you want more money.

9 It's just coming to a point,
10 enough is enough, and we need more competition in
11 this state to get We Energies the heck out of
12 here. Thank you.

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

14 LaDette Austin, Natalie Wasek,
15 Raphael Gray.

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1 LaDETTE AUSTIN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. AUSTIN: Good evening. I just,
4 first of all, wanted to thank the Commission for
5 having this meeting. My name is LaDette Austin.
6 I'm here as a concerned citizen. I also do
7 community outreach for a private company in
8 childcare. So I hear everything.

9 I hear parents that are
10 concerned. They a lot of times don't know where
11 their next meal is coming from, let alone how
12 they're going to pay all their bills. I think --
13 I believe 13 percent is just astronomical. It's
14 just too much. The residents themselves, I
15 hear all the time, and they're already
16 concerned.

17 We Energies is a private entity,
18 but it's in Milwaukee County that has the
19 monopoly. There are other energies around the
20 state like Alliant and some others, but for
21 Milwaukee County, those 19 municipalities,
22 they're the only, as they say, horse and buggy
23 act in the town.

24 The budget is not manageable for
25 most people, even though they say, Come on down,

1 apply, we've raised the rates -- we've raised the
2 limit on how much you can make in order to get --
3 in order to get assistance, but it's still not
4 manageable.

5 Our elected officials, we do need
6 them because they speak for the masses because
7 all of us just can't be here, and you can see
8 from the people in this room that it should be
9 overflowing, but it's not.

10 I don't know how the word is
11 getting out otherwise, but it should have been
12 standing room only in this room. If the elected
13 officials are not doing what they need to do,
14 then we the people, we have to vote them out and
15 get somebody that will.

16 The Public Service Commission, I
17 hope you do listen to us. We appreciate that.
18 The cost of inflation, food, gasoline, rent,
19 fuel, housing, mortgages, people that are
20 suffering from COVID that have not even bounced
21 back. The mental stress, as the young lady
22 mentioned previously.

23 We're not saying that
24 We Energies doesn't give back. We're not
25 saying that they don't do some things in the

1 community. But this is too much for the
2 average citizen. Thank you.

3 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

4 Natalie Wasek. Raphael Gray,
5 Stephani Lohman.

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1 NATALIE WASEK, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. WASEK: Hi. My name is Natalie
4 Wasek. I am here to disagree with the high
5 proposed increase. The proposed rate increase
6 focuses solely on the returns and shareholders
7 and disregards key stakeholders, the users and
8 customers, as well as the impact on the
9 customers.

10 The transition to clean energy has
11 to include those most impacted. This
12 higher-than-average increased rate, this
13 magnitude is not fair to those already struggling
14 to make ends meet and comes at a time with
15 already forecasted increases of heating costs
16 this winter.

17 We Energies' residential customers
18 already pay the highest bills of any residential
19 customers in the state, and Wisconsin rates are
20 on average the second highest in the Midwest.

21 I also support the testimony of
22 the Citizens Utility Board and Clean Wisconsin in
23 this case that demonstrates that the return on
24 equity has been too high and has been allowed to
25 be too high for too long.

1 Profit has an increase of a
2 billion dollars over so far this year, and the
3 company clearly isn't struggling, but customers
4 continue to struggle to make ends meet and cannot
5 afford this increase.

6 I'm upset that We Energies has
7 flipped support and flipped focus from the
8 customers to big corporations, allowing for
9 smaller increases for large corporations and
10 putting the larger share of the burden and
11 increases on its customers. Thank you.

12 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Great. Thanks very
13 much.

14 Raphael Gray. Stephani Lohman,
15 Ben Mulick, it looks like.

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1 STEPHANI LOHMAN, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. LOHMAN: Hi. My name is Stephani
4 Lohman. I am the vice president of the WFNHP
5 nurses union at the Milwaukee VA and a member of
6 the Milwaukee DSA, former executive board member
7 there, and I am here representing myself today.

8 I wanted to say that the working
9 class in Milwaukee is rising. I mean, all you
10 have to do a look around you and see all the
11 people who are here representing the citizens.

12 These folks showed up to take
13 We Energies to task. The PSC has an appointed
14 board, and you should take notice. Human beings
15 have some basic needs, shelter, water, energy,
16 and health care. All of these things are
17 commodified here in the U.S.

18 What that means is that we have to
19 go to work, we have to sell our labor to pay for
20 things that we cannot live without. So this
21 exorbitant rate hike means that we have to work
22 more, and I don't want to work more. I want to
23 work less; and what I certainly don't want to do
24 is work harder to line the pockets of corporate
25 profiteers.

1 Some folks here point to the good
2 work that We Energies does in the community.
3 That's just money laundering disguised as
4 philanthropy, and the worst part about all of
5 this is that we don't even get a choice.

6 You know, We Energies is the only
7 shop in town, and the PSC has been complicit in
8 continuing to squeeze the working class year
9 after year. What we need is for the PSC to
10 reject this rate hike; and what we need is a
11 publicly-owned utility so that we stop being had
12 by these corporate wolves.

13 The We Energies board, Curt C.
14 Culver, mortgage investor; Danny L. Cunningham,
15 works at Deloitte & Touche, director of Enerpac;
16 William Farrow, a banker; Crist Garcia-Thomas,
17 C-Suite at Advocate Aurora; Maria Green,
18 Ingersoll & Rand legal counsel, director at
19 Littlefuse, another energy company, director at
20 Tennant & Company; Gail Kappa, former CEO at
21 We Energies, director at Associated Banc-Corp,
22 director of Badger Meter; Thomas Lane, investment
23 banker, Energy Capital Partners; Scott Lauber,
24 president and CEO of We Energies in Michigan --
25 and in Michigan, a whole bunch of Michigan

1 utilities; Ulice Payne, a lawyer, a founder at
2 Addison & Clifton, director at Manpower, director
3 at Foot Locker; Mary Ellen Stanek, Baird
4 Financial Investor, trustee at Northwestern
5 Mutual Life; Glenn E. Tellock, CEO -- former CEO
6 at Lakeside Foods, a director at Astec, director
7 at Badger Meter; the PSC, Rebecca, worked for
8 We Energies.

9 Does this seem fair to any of you?
10 Because it seems pretty unfair to me. So it's
11 the fox starting the henhouse, and they're just
12 squeezing the working class from the middle; and
13 so at a certain point, what else can you get out
14 of us?

15 And so I hope that the PSC makes
16 some common sense decisions on what they do
17 because now it's labor coming too, right, because
18 I don't want to work. I don't want to work like
19 a dog until I'm 75 years old to pay for something
20 that I can't live without. We live in Wisconsin.
21 Nobody should be without heat or energy at all,
22 at all during the year.

23 So this summer, my neighbor, Bob,
24 who is an 84-year-old man, installed his first
25 central air conditioning unit after owning his

1 house since 1959. The first day that it was hot,
2 I called Alderman Borkowski -- and I'm so proud
3 that he's here representing his constituents
4 because our neighborhood was without power for
5 days.

6 So what a gut punch for you to
7 finally get yourself a central air unit when
8 you're on your way out of this world only to have
9 it not work; and when we called We Energies, they
10 told us that our neighborhood was better off than
11 others and that we're about seven years down from
12 upgrades.

13 So this company made a billion
14 dollars, but they have no interest in upgrading
15 our public infrastructure because that means less
16 money for their shareholders. Their share just
17 increased by 17 percent, and one thing that
18 drives that up is knowing that they're going to
19 bilk us out of another 13 percent.

20 So the average person is going to
21 see a \$20 increase on their bill. Doesn't really
22 seem like that much, but spread over 1.1 million
23 customers in their area means that that is a ton
24 of money. That's a ton of money that we could
25 use to do better things in our community.

1 And so I hope that everyone here
2 will look up Power to the People Campaign.
3 There's a lot of work being done in our
4 communities to publicize our energy because we
5 wouldn't have conversations like this.

6 We wouldn't be sitting in this
7 great mid-century senior center bitching at the
8 PSC to do what they know is right, but they
9 probably won't do anyway because they're greedy,
10 because greed is the devil. So I hope that you
11 do what is right. Thank you.

12 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

13 Ben Mulick.

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1 BEN MULICK, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. MULICK: Hi. My name is Ben
4 Mulick, and I'm a member of the Party for
5 Socialism and Liberation. The Public Service
6 Commission should deny the request for a
7 13 percent rate hike.

8 We Energies is already the most
9 profitable utility company in the state of
10 Wisconsin and one of the most profitable utility
11 companies in the country. They have the money to
12 transition to green energy if that's what they
13 want.

14 What this increase really amounts
15 to is We Energies trying to stick hardworking
16 people with the bill. The people of Wisconsin
17 are the ones who provide We Energies with their
18 massive profits; and when there's a chance to
19 give back to the people who make them rich, the
20 company should be footing the bill with a smile,
21 not trying to dig deeper and deeper into our
22 pockets.

23 We're already watching inflation
24 eat away more and more of our paychecks each
25 year while prices keep rising for necessities

1 like the rent that we have to pay to keep a roof
2 over our heads, the groceries that we need to
3 live, and the gas that many of us need to get to
4 work and make those paychecks to begin with.
5 Expenses like those are unavoidable, and too many
6 people are already struggling with the
7 necessities to pay 13 percent more every month so
8 that their power company can maintain its profit
9 margins.

10 We have already heard some
11 previous speakers; and as we can see, We Energies
12 has the money to be generous with some local
13 organizations, and I'm sure that that's something
14 that they're doing entirely out of the kindness
15 of their big, warm corporate heart.

16 My question is, when they're
17 clearly making enough money to make flashy
18 donations in convenient places, why do they need
19 the help of the normal working people to pay
20 their own business costs? Wisconsin needs to
21 move towards cleaner energy; and when it's time
22 to pay for that transition, the simple fact is
23 that We Energies has the money, and we the people
24 don't.

25 The fact that we're having this

1 conversation at all is evidence that running
2 Wisconsin's energy or any other vital service,
3 for that matter, is a task that's far too
4 important to be left up to private companies
5 seeking profit. We need publicly-owned utilities
6 that we can collectively hold accountable.

7 If democracy is good enough to
8 decide who runs your city, it should be good
9 enough to decide whether your fridge works.
10 Thank you.

11 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Harini Shah, if I'm
12 saying that right, S-h-a-h. Then we have Alexa
13 Safer and Victoria Gillet.

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1 HARINI SHAH, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. SHAH: Greetings. I am a medical
4 student at the Medical College of Wisconsin. My
5 name is Harini Shah. I serve on the board of
6 directors of the Milwaukee Medical Society. I'm
7 here representing myself.

8 I have the privilege to treat
9 patients and citizens of Milwaukee on a daily
10 basis. My job is to hear their stories, what
11 brought them to the hospital, and help find a
12 treatment for their ailments.

13 Last week I walked into the
14 hospital room of a female patient in her 50s with
15 chest pain. She looked somnolent, pained. In
16 her story, I learned that she has chronic lung
17 disease and needs 24/7 home oxygen for her body
18 to survive. Growing up, she had asthma. Her
19 parents struggled to meet their energy bills. So
20 during the winter, she struggled to control her
21 breathing. Her wheezing was terrible.

22 Now that she's on home oxygen,
23 she's completely dependent on an adequate energy
24 system to survive. She was recently evicted and
25 lives with her sister now. Her sister also

1 struggles to make ends meet. She told me that
2 the only way she could ensure that she gets home
3 oxygen for the night is by coming to the
4 hospital.

5 Behind these stories is, in fact,
6 a real person and real people who should have
7 access to the minimal needs to survive. If
8 We Energies increases their energy rates, my
9 patient will continue to face this difficult
10 decision of choosing between her energy bill and
11 medical care. It's not fair to her and all of my
12 other energy-dependent patients, and I'm speaking
13 on behalf of them.

14 Here's the bottom line. This
15 proposal is rushed. We Energies knows that the
16 deadline is coming up, and they're using a back
17 door, the benefit of time, to approve this rate
18 change. The company itself in its brief declared
19 that they did not read through all information
20 from intervenors in this case. That is, by
21 definition, negligence.

22 I urge the PSC to deny the current
23 proposal for a 13 percent rate increase for 2023
24 and require We Energies to resubmit a new
25 proposal for next year provided that they read

1 through, in its entirety, all information from
2 this case's intervenors, Clean Wisconsin and
3 Walnut Way. January is only a month away. Thank
4 you.

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

6 Alexa Safer, Victoria Gillet,
7 Jennifer Abel.

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1 ALEXA SAFER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. SAFER: Hi. I'm Alexa Safer. I am
4 not with any group or anything like that tonight,
5 but I am just here as a single mom and working
6 person. I don't -- first of all, I obviously
7 want to say that I'm urging the PSC to deny this
8 rate hike.

9 I have had my electricity turned
10 off before in the past, and it's such a
11 heartbreaking thing to happen with your children
12 in the house, and all the food in your fridge
13 goes bad, and you don't have food stamps for a
14 week and a half to replace it. It's like this
15 hole you get into, and you're always in debt to
16 We Energies, and it just never seems like you can
17 get out.

18 I do get the assistance, the
19 energy assistance, but it's never enough. And I
20 feel like this latest job I took where I'm making
21 \$25 an hour, it sounded so good; and every little
22 bit of extra of that has been eaten up in the
23 last six months with the rising cost of food and
24 gas and rent and just literally everything,
25 clothing for my growing children; and there's no

1 way that I would be able to absorb a 13 percent
2 rate increase personally. I don't know what I
3 would do.

4 I don't understand why We Energies
5 expects the working class and the poor of this
6 city to pick up the tab to clean up the mess that
7 they made. We're not making 13 percent more.
8 Where are we supposed to get the money?

9 They wanted this business. They
10 should deal with the cost of running it. Taking
11 it from the massive profit maybe that they're
12 raking in would be a good idea and try to --
13 instead of trying to squeeze us poor and working
14 people out of the little bit that we have left at
15 the end of the month.

16 The last thing that I want to say
17 is that we should decommodify electricity and
18 energy because it's a human right, it's a human
19 necessity. And I'm really appreciative of
20 everybody that showed up because, as a working
21 person, I know how hard it is to come to these
22 things after you work a whole day and you're
23 taking care of your kids and you gotta leave them
24 home alone to do whatever they're gonna do so
25 that you can just try to have your voice heard.

1 It's a lot easier to just be like, Well, I'm
2 going to stay home tonight because I'm exhausted.
3 So to everyone that showed up tonight, thank you,
4 and solidarity.

5 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks very much.

6 Jennifer Abel and Alexa Nutile,
7 N-u-t-i-l-e.

8 So I just want to mention, we do
9 have a significant number of comments still to go
10 through, and we have that time deadline here for
11 tonight of about 8:15. So I just want to --
12 please keep your comments shorter. I want to
13 give everyone a chance to comment if they can,
14 but just try to be succinct.

15 So let's get started with our next
16 one.

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1 VICTORIA GILLET, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. GILLET: So I want to start by
4 saying thank you to the Public Service Commission
5 for letting us be back in person. This is the
6 first in-person PSC event that I've been able to
7 attend since I started attending these; and it is
8 really inspirational to have everybody here
9 together talking, and we can meet each other. It
10 just feels really, really nice. So I'm really
11 very thankful for that.

12 My name is Victoria Gillet. I'm here
13 tonight speaking on behalf of myself, but based
14 on the foundation of the work that I do with the
15 Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action
16 and the American College of Physicians, we, in
17 all of those groups, believe that climate change
18 is the greatest threat to the health of the human
19 race and that the structure of our societies
20 depends -- controls the health of the individuals
21 that we are.

22 And so it's the mission of those
23 organizations to go out and figure out what are
24 the policies that best benefit public health, and
25 I'm here today to say that this 13 percent rate

1 increase is not one of those policies.

2 I know that my patients require
3 both the excellent care that I provide as a
4 primary care physician, but also a healthy
5 environment for them to live in. If their
6 environment isn't healthy, then it doesn't matter
7 how many medicines I prescribe, how many
8 specialists I send you to, what tests I give you,
9 you will never be well regardless if that's not
10 set up.

11 And I would say also, you know,
12 I'm a stopgap measure in that circumstance; and
13 all of these really wonderful nonprofits that
14 We Energies is giving money to -- you know, I
15 work for four nonprofits, right, I'm not saying
16 they shouldn't exist in our current universe,
17 but they are also stopgap measures. If people
18 can afford to stay in their homes, you wouldn't
19 have to send your kids to the Boys & Girls Club,
20 and that would be the world that I want to live
21 in.

22 I'm a primary care physician in
23 downtown Milwaukee, and We Energies has an
24 astonishing impact on my patients' health.
25 They've got coal plants 20 miles from my clinic

1 that spew cancer and asthma-causing toxins into
2 the air. They're doubling down on burning
3 methane gas that hastens climate change, and this
4 public utility wants more of our money to support
5 these practices that are so damaging to our
6 public health.

7 These price increases will in and
8 of themselves cause even more problems for our
9 community's health as every individual here has
10 already spoken to their personal experience so
11 clearly. But I can also speak to individual
12 patients because they tell me these problems all
13 the time in the safety of our relationship.

14 I have a patient who's blind and
15 on dialysis whose home is so poorly insulated
16 that she has to run her oven for heat in the
17 winter. She should have energy-efficient
18 windows, not a 13 percent higher gas bill.

19 Another patient has such severe
20 asthma that in the heat of summer he can barely
21 breathe. He can't afford to run air
22 conditioning. So he closes his blinds, closes
23 his windows and sits unmoving in a dark room
24 essentially the entire summer. He should have an
25 energy-efficient heat pump, not a 13 percent

1 higher electricity bill.

2 At a time when other utilities are
3 moving toward renewable energy and
4 electrification, We Energies seems determined to
5 drive our health backward; and in the defense of
6 human health, I ask the Public Service Commission
7 to deny this rate increase. Thanks.

8 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

9 Jennifer Abel, Alexa Nutile, and
10 coming up, Senator -- it looks like Moore -- I
11 can't see the rest.

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1 JENNIFER ABEL, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. ABEL: My name is Jennifer Abel,
4 and I'm representing myself, but I'm also a
5 volunteer with the Great Waters Group of the
6 Sierra Club, and I've spoken at many public
7 hearings before. When I do, I typically focus my
8 remarks on the deleterious impacts that proposed
9 actions or projects will have on the environment
10 and on climate change.

11 I decided to take a different
12 approach this time and turn instead to my
13 professional role as an expert on financial
14 capability and financial security. It's no
15 surprise that when people have trouble meeting
16 their financial obligations, they experience
17 increased stress.

18 What may be less known is the
19 impact that stress can have on family members and
20 others close to the individuals experiencing
21 financial hardship. In a 2018 study, researchers
22 Yuerong Liu and Darcey Merritt found that
23 children living in families with high financial
24 stress experienced higher internalizing behaviors
25 than those in families with low financial stress.

1 Internalizing behaviors, by the
2 way, include depressive disorders, anxiety
3 disorders and teenage suicide. In a 2016 study,
4 Lucero, et al., found that women who experience
5 high levels of economic hardship over time have
6 the highest odds of experiencing intimate partner
7 violence.

8 On the heels of a historic
9 pandemic and in the midst of the worst inflation
10 our country has seen in 40 years, many people are
11 struggling to cover the cost of basic necessities
12 like housing, food and utilities. Raising
13 electricity by 13 percent right now is like
14 pouring salt in a wound.

15 We Energies is already known for
16 dragging its feet on taking steps to mitigate and
17 prevent climate change. Do they really want to
18 also be known as a major contributor to increased
19 financial stress that leads to childhood
20 depression and anxiety and more domestic
21 violence?

22 Instead of deepening the financial
23 troubles of ratepayers, I urge the Public Service
24 Commission to deny We Energies' request for the
25 rate increase and also for We Energies to do the

1 right thing by expanding energy-efficiency
2 programs, expanding eligibility for the LIFT
3 program and increasing access through renewable
4 energy.

5 We've got a great opportunity
6 right now to take action on combating energy
7 burden instead of continuing the painful cycle of
8 disconnection and reconnection that so many
9 Milwaukee families experience.

10 Please work together with the
11 organizations and communities represented here in
12 this room tonight to be a leader on environmental
13 economic justice instead of a perpetrator of
14 instability. Thank you.

15 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

16 All right. Alexa.

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1 ALEXA NUTILE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. NUTILE: Thank you. So I just
4 wanted to say that I'm really not happy that we
5 all have to be here tonight. I'm really tired.
6 I just worked all day, and I'm hungry, and I came
7 straight from work; and so I want to just give a
8 shout-out to all the people who are here tonight.
9 I'm really proud of you, and we shouldn't have to
10 be here.

11 So I want to urge the PSC to deny
12 the request for the rate raise of We Energies.
13 But the reason I'm here is because I'm also tired
14 of paying these exorbitant bills. I am tired of
15 hearing about my friends and neighbors not being
16 able to pay their bills. I'm tired of having to
17 donate to GoFundMes to help my neighbors get
18 something that is an essential that is a
19 necessity to live life.

20 You need energy for just about
21 everything. You need it to cook, to preserve
22 your food; you need it for heat; you need it for
23 AC; you need it to do your homework; you need it
24 to use your phone and charge your devices,
25 including medical devices. It should be a public

1 good, and it should be for the people, and it
2 should be at a low, affordable cost.

3 It's just condemning all of us to
4 struggling even harder to make ends meet. It's a
5 necessity, like I said; and it is a necessity
6 because we require all these things to live
7 healthy lives. It's a social determinant of
8 health to have things like shelter and energy;
9 and so it's reducing our social determinants of
10 health.

11 And what's happening is that it is
12 reducing our life expectancy. The life
13 expectancy of people in the United States is
14 going down; and the last time I checked, it's not
15 a crime to deny people of these essential items,
16 but it should be.

17 So that's why I'm here, and that's
18 why I presume that the Public Service Commission
19 exists, is to protect the interests of the people
20 who need these things to survive.

21 I also wanted to say, I'm also an
22 educator that has worked in nonprofits, and I am
23 just frankly disgusted by We Energies using their
24 philanthropy as an excuse and a reason why they
25 should not be held accountable.

1 These organizations should be
2 funded. Don't get me wrong, they should be
3 funded, and they should be funded publicly as
4 well, quite frankly, by our government; and so
5 don't force us to choose between youth services
6 and energy.

7 These are essential things. We
8 need both of them, and it's really disgusting and
9 really manipulative to have people come up here
10 and tell us that we should choose youth services
11 and philanthropy over energy which we need to
12 survive. Thank you.

13 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thanks.

14 Did I call Richard Diaz?

15 MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Nope.

16 EXAMINER NEWMARK: So I think you're
17 actually -- I think I messed up the order of
18 this. So Richard Diaz and then the Senator and
19 then Francesca Dawson.

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1 RICHARD DIAZ, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. DIAZ: All right. Thank you. So,
4 so many good comments this evening, and it is
5 really hard to top anything that's been said, but
6 it's not a show. So maybe my testimony can serve
7 as some reinforcement.

8 I'm fully against the Public
9 Service Commission approving any form of a rate
10 hike, let alone a 13 percent increase. For black
11 and brown folks from Milwaukee who are labeled as
12 energy burden, you know, we pay some of the
13 highest energy bills with the oldest housing
14 stock.

15 It is unfortunate that the
16 system and utility of energy in our state of
17 Wisconsin, in southeastern Wisconsin benefits
18 the rich and the wealthy. You know, it's
19 unfortunate that every year a rate hike is
20 imposed, that We Energies gets their way.

21 You know, even from pre-pandemic
22 levels to now, energy bills have skyrocketed, but
23 how is that so when the profit -- profitability
24 of the utility and the shareholders has
25 skyrocketed? That makes very little sense, and

1 the only rationale behind it is you want to make
2 your wealth off the backs of people that can't
3 afford energy prices.

4 The testimony we've heard today
5 has mostly been against the rate increase, and
6 it's from working class black and brown folks who
7 just can't foot an increase in their bill. The
8 folks that have been in support of We Energies
9 have been folks that receive money from
10 We Energies.

11 It's unfair, and it's not right,
12 and it has to stop now; and I encourage the
13 Public Service Commission to continue a dialogue
14 with ratepayers to see how We Energies can
15 actually do more.

16 You know, We Energies has the
17 profit margins to give a 13 percent reduction in
18 energy bills to the next 40, 50 generations of
19 people. So, again, I am solidly against the rate
20 increase, and thank you for allowing me to give
21 my testimony.

22 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Senator,
23 please come up -- Representative. I'm sorry.

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1 SUPREME MOORE OMOKUNDE, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. MOORE OMOKUNDE: So first and

4 foremost, there has been some great testimony

5 here today, and I want to affiliate myself with

6 much of what has already been stated.

7 I'm here -- my name is Supreme

8 Moore Omokunde, and I'm here representing the

9 people of the 17th Assembly District. I am also

10 a member of the Assembly's Energy and Utilities

11 Committee, and I am asking the Public Service

12 Commission to deny We Energies' request in the

13 rate hike.

14 It is ridiculous, and I'm sure in

15 the next couple of weeks I'll get an email asking

16 me to be sensible and giving me all types of

17 reasons that they need this 13 percent increase,

18 especially in January when people are going to be

19 suffering from cold and need to warm their homes.

20 We need to be looking to get to zero emissions

21 ASAP. By 2030 we need to be at least by half; by

22 2050 we need to be at zero.

23 The reasons that we need to reject

24 this request is for several. One, they are

25 recording record profits, as you've already heard

1 from other people's testimony. They're getting
2 record profits, and the first thing that they
3 seem to be doing is increasing the salary of
4 executives, one. And two, and the other reason
5 is that we have a \$5.4 billion surplus in the
6 state right now, and there should be
7 conversations about how we can assist those who
8 are paying, you know, these high, exorbitant
9 bills right now instead of baling out this
10 utility company and putting it on the backs of
11 the people who they are concerned with.

12 Everyone, all things -- all costs
13 are raising, prices on everything is raising.
14 Everyone is raising the cost of everything simply
15 because they can.

16 We cannot -- as a general note,
17 we cannot continue to hide behind inflation and
18 supply chain and phrases like that to tell
19 people that we have to raise their costs; and
20 much of it, they're simply making up for the
21 money that they lost during the throes of the
22 pandemic.

23 We cannot continue to put
24 everything on the backs of the people who are
25 purchasing. We need to move away from

1 dependence on fossil fuels and focus on
2 closing -- We Energies needs to focus on closing
3 the coal-fired plants that they have and moving
4 towards renewable energy. That should be the
5 focus that we have.

6 We need We Energies to recommit to
7 closing the coal-fired plants. We need to make
8 sure that they're doing it in a timely manner and
9 not saying, Oh, we need more of an extension, we
10 need an extension, and we can't raise rates to
11 say that we're trying to move to greener
12 infrastructure.

13 We have the dollars coming from
14 the Inflation Reduction Act and other monies. We
15 need to be moving closer to a greener
16 infrastructure, period. I ask the Public Service
17 Commission to reject this request for a rate
18 hike. Thank you.

19 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Francesca Dawson and
20 Jose -- it looks like Guerrero and Patricia
21 Sumnicht or close to that.

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1 FRANCESCA DAWSON, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. DAWSON: Hi. I'm Francesca Dawson,
4 and I come to this committee asking for you not
5 to increase, but I also come with a possible
6 solution to the problem. I don't just look at a
7 problem. I look for a solution to a problem.

8 I'll give you a little background
9 of myself real quick. I live in the city of
10 Milwaukee, actually live in the Walnut Way
11 Lindsay Heights area. In 2021 I invested in
12 solar panels, and I put those solar panels on my
13 roof of my garage.

14 There was a roof buying program at
15 the time that a group of people bought solar
16 panels at the same time which caused the costs to
17 go down of the purchase of solar panels, which
18 had the company give me back over \$800, had Focus
19 on Energy give me \$500, which had the Federal
20 Government give me a \$7,000 credit. Okay.

21 What I am proposing to We Energies
22 is that you do a beta test. Before you do an
23 increase of anything is that you do a beta test.
24 Have you ever thought of a solar farm? You do it
25 for the large corporations. Have you thought

1 about it for the residents? Have you thought
2 about -- there is that energy bill that's out
3 there that just been passed by the Feds. You're
4 subjects to get those credits.

5 If you put solar panels on
6 low-income houses in the city of Milwaukee, the
7 energy that is not used by the residents go back
8 into the grid. So you're getting energy back
9 from your investments on the houses of low-income
10 families, number one.

11 You do have nice programs, like
12 time of use for those families that are working
13 during the day that they can get a lower energy
14 cost at night. There's those weatherization
15 programs. The issue that I have as a landlord
16 when I'm working with my tenants -- now, my
17 tenants and I have an agreement, I will not go up
18 on their rent, and I will work with you guys on
19 the energy part of it because some of them can't
20 get in the program because they need that
21 deposit.

22 For you to get your money back
23 from the people that cannot pay you, if they have
24 solar panels, their costs are cheaper.
25 Therefore, the problem that people are having is

1 they're going on the budget, the budget cost is
2 high; and they still owe you money from what they
3 used before.

4 If you have a solar farm -- I
5 can't speak for Lindsay Heights or Walnut Way
6 because I'm not on the board or the committee,
7 but I do live in the neighborhood. Maybe you can
8 work with the nonprofit organization, put solar
9 panels on the houses and work that way.

10 I strongly recommend that you work
11 with the landlords with these houses because
12 there are residents who have a hard time paying
13 the utilities, managing their money because of
14 stress, because of mental health illness.

15 I have residents in my house and
16 some of my properties that have a mental health
17 illness. They cannot follow those programs all
18 the way through to the end to get full benefit of
19 it. Is that your problem? Maybe not.

20 But I'm asking you not to increase
21 the utilities for at least -- come back to them
22 later in about three years. Let's test this out.
23 Let's put solar panels. You get the federal tax
24 credit. Let's put solar panels on the low-income
25 houses and see what they do. You got project

1 managers. You can run statistics. Let's see
2 what we find by using this energy, this new-found
3 energy, by solar panels, for example.

4 My bill now with that is less than
5 a hundred dollars; where before, I'm paying 200,
6 \$300, and I have a fairly new house. So I can't
7 even imagine what people are paying and their
8 houses are not.

9 Did the same thing on my parents'
10 house in Georgia. The bill for solar panels,
11 the bill came back last month as a dollar and
12 90 cent. So I'm asking We Energies to invest in
13 the community in which we live, and I feel
14 strongly that you will get your money back
15 without doing this 13 percent increase.

16 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks
17 very much.

18 Next up Jose and then Patricia and
19 Geneva Jones. That's all the slips I have so
20 far.

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1 JOSE GUERRERO, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MR. GUERRERO: Hello. My name is Jose.

4 I am honestly angry that this is even being
5 proposed. 13 percent is ridiculous. And let's
6 be honest, we will not see better service. Most
7 of that 13 percent will not go to the working
8 people. It will not go to the workers. Most of
9 it will go to those that are already wealthy.

10 So it is absurd that we should
11 raise 13 percent just so they can afford their
12 super yachts again. Most of the people here
13 dream of having a better tomorrow. Everyone
14 wants to see a life where it's a little easier to
15 survive, you know.

16 And when we're talking about the
17 profits of a company in a state that needs energy
18 to survive the cold northern winters, how is that
19 even -- why is profit the first thing that comes
20 up? That shouldn't -- that shouldn't be the way
21 it is.

22 We should be thinking about how we
23 can make this a public service, how we can help
24 people, how we can help those people that are
25 suffering the most, those that can't pay, that

1 feel the cold in the winter the most.
2 We shouldn't be talking about
3 13 percent. We shouldn't be talking about
4 money. We should be talking about helping each
5 other and making something better, because I am
6 tired of people talking about going big or giving
7 up. I'm tired of people talking about who's
8 gonna win that 1.5 billion in the jackpot, when
9 more people should be here talking about things
10 that affect all of us. I'm just appalled that
11 this is even something that we have to spend our
12 evening talking about.

13 So that's all I have to say.

14 Thank you.

15 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks.

16 Patricia Sumnicht.

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1 PATRICIA SUMNIGHT, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. SUMNIGHT: My name is Patricia
4 Sumnicht. Now, I'm able to pay my bills because
5 I have a pension, and I've got Social Security.

6 But I'm really resentful of the
7 fact that We Energies can make a 10 percent
8 profit and are raising our bills by 13 percent.
9 Corporate profits are causing inflation, and
10 We Energies is just piling on.

11 For a utility to take advantage of
12 us when we have no other way to get our energy is
13 outrageous. Corporate profits are at an all-time
14 high. Corporate profits are driving inflation,
15 and We Energies is contributing to this.

16 When We Energies' CEOs can make a
17 million dollars a year from a public utility,
18 that is obscene. So I'm going to make it short
19 and sweet. Please deny this rate increase.

20 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thanks
21 very much.

22 Geneva Jones.

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1 GENEVA JONES, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. JONES: I like to state that I
4 oppose this rate increase. I like to say that I
5 am here as a citizen and that I am supporting --
6 I will support Walnut Way's decision to oppose
7 this energy rate increase and any settlement
8 around it. I'll give you a couple of stories,
9 and I'll make it quick.

10 You have a grandmother who is
11 going to bed at night in the winter with a
12 flannel pajama set on, socks, a fuzzy housecoat,
13 and blankets on top of her so that when and if
14 her grandbabies come by, that she can then turn
15 on the heat for them so she can afford that bill
16 or to pay that bill at the end of the month
17 because, as you know, they keep going up.

18 I received a bill at one point for
19 \$499 a month, one month for \$499. They talk
20 about a 6 percent rate increase. They didn't ask
21 me. They didn't come to me to ask me what my
22 income was because that wasn't a 6 percent
23 increase. That was a 50 percent.

24 And I tell you another situation.
25 The weatherization -- this winter, this

1 weatherization, they came to my home, and they
2 talked about how the bricks are staggered in the
3 wall so they couldn't give insulation, they
4 couldn't put insulation in the wall.

5 Never once did they offer to fix
6 windows. They didn't say anything about the
7 lights that come shining through the door because
8 the door was off-kilter. They didn't mention,
9 Oh, well, we can't do that; however, we can put
10 solar panels maybe on the top of her house.
11 Let's check out her roof.

12 They just wanted to come in, send
13 some people to check a box, and get paid. Well,
14 I called in on those people to say this is what I
15 didn't get, and the response that I received from
16 the weatherization people was -- first I called
17 We Energies, then they gave me the number to the
18 weatherization people. And believe me, this --
19 it is a nightmare trying to figure out who's on
20 first, who's on second, whatever that's all
21 about.

22 I need to call the company that
23 came in and did the weatherization because they
24 came to my house; and I said to the lady, Why
25 should I have to contact someone you approved? I

1 didn't approve them. I wouldn't have chose those
2 people. And she said, Well, you have the right.
3 And I'm saying, Well, you didn't give me that
4 right, and you didn't give me that off. So you
5 find them, and believe it or not, nobody is
6 accountable and it was dead in the water.

7 This is the kind of partnerships
8 that We Energies has taken upon themselves, and
9 I am so doggone tired of it. I'm so tired of
10 We Energies coming in, talking about what they
11 need, what their wants are during this time of
12 inflation, the cost of living raises, we went
13 through a pandemic; and these people have -- or
14 could have a heart. They just don't know where
15 it is. They can't find it because it's lost in
16 their stockholders, not their stakeholders, and
17 I'm tired of that, for real.

18 And We Energies can get on board
19 with us or we can just keep -- we can keep having
20 problems with one another, and that's not good
21 for anybody. So the lady that mentioned the
22 solar panels, I would have loved it if
23 We Energies had an option for that.

24 But in the city of Milwaukee or
25 where black and brown people are living, where

1 they're unserved, where there's urban
2 communities, where there's poor people all over,
3 We Energies will only have a LIFT program, as the
4 one person said, with limited numbers. Will they
5 bring their pilot programs down like the solar
6 panels? No. You don't see them in the city of
7 Milwaukee. Everyone who has them and who has
8 mentioned them said they had to buy them. They
9 had to figure out a way as a group to afford
10 them.

11 We Energies is not giving back
12 anything. When We Energies offers you the LIFT
13 program, as many have said, if you cannot -- if
14 you miss one day and pay it the next day, if they
15 are not feeling good that day or the socks don't
16 match or they didn't find them in the laundry or
17 whatever, they can just cut you off, and that's
18 not humanity. That's greed. That's capitalism.

19 And if We Energies would like to
20 go on record to say that they're diverse from
21 their customers, that they're taking a value from
22 us, that they do not value us, then We Energies
23 is gonna see a whole lot more PSC. They gonna
24 see a whole lot more, and we're fighting the
25 monopoly right now to get other systems in here.

1 So I thank you, Commissioners, for
2 having this for us, for hearing us out. But
3 please do not give these folks and their
4 stockholders off the top of whatever lawsuit
5 goes through that 10 percent -- million
6 dollars -- that's ridiculous, when they can put
7 that back into the community.

8 So thank you for your time.

9 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Thank you.

10 Danielle Shuster, and then we have
11 Elizabeth Ward, and that's our last slip here.
12 Is Danielle here? No? All right. Okay. I
13 guess we'll take Elizabeth next.

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1 ELIZABETH WARD, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. WARD: Thank you to both of you for
4 being here and for allowing this opportunity.
5 We've heard a lot tonight. So I'm just going to
6 add a few points on it because people have spoken
7 so eloquently.

8 We Energies is trying to make this
9 rate case about customer affordability versus
10 clean energy, but we know that's not true and, in
11 fact, we know that clean energy and energy
12 efficiency is the solution to so many of the
13 problems we've heard about tonight.

14 What we do know is that during
15 the 2019 rate case, it was found that shutting
16 down the Oak Creek power plant would save
17 customers \$75 million. We Energies recently
18 announced they're going to keep this power plant
19 online.

20 We know that We Energies is not
21 moving forward with clean energy and certainly
22 not fast enough. We Energies recently received a
23 Grade D from a report we put out about their
24 transition, and We Energies has doubled down on
25 fossil fuels and proposed gas plant conversions,

1 new gas facilities and storage facilities.

2 For one of these facilities, the
3 gas storage facility in Ixonia, it was found that
4 We Energies could more cheaply fund a
5 weatherization and energy-efficiency program than
6 build the facility, saving ratepayer money,
7 reducing energy use; and if targeted at the right
8 communities, reducing energy burden. They chose
9 to move forward with the facility instead.

10 We know they've ignored residents'
11 calls to fund weatherization programs that would
12 reduce energy burden while reducing the need for
13 We Energies, saving every We Energies customer
14 money; and we know that they made all of these
15 decisions claiming it was about reliability but
16 seemingly don't care about reliability or
17 keeping the lights on of the people we've heard
18 today.

19 Now they're asking for a massive
20 increase to their rates. When we've all stood
21 together this summer and called on We Energies to
22 reduce their increase and fund programs that will
23 support the neighbors we're hearing about today,
24 We Energies responded by increasing their rate
25 request even more and are now asking for

1 13 percent.

2 We know that this is a red
3 herring, and we hope the Commissioners recognize
4 that as well. 13 percent is too high, and their
5 original 8 percent request is also too high.
6 This is not okay.

7 So I hope that the Commission will
8 ignore the fallacy We Energies is trying to put
9 forward that we can't have affordability and
10 action on climate change and still hold them
11 accountable. Thank you.

12 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thank
13 you. So there's two appearance slips given to
14 me. Maybe the people didn't come up yet. So
15 Raphael Gray and Diane Shuster. Anybody here?
16 Just wanted to make sure.

17 All right. So that's all the
18 slips I have. Any other slips by the table?

19 MS. STARK: Is there any way I can add?

20 EXAMINER NEWMARK: You can add just for
21 a minute.

22 MS. STARK: Two seconds.

23 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Two seconds. Okay.

24 Come back up. Give us your name,
25 and remember you're under oath.

1 MS. STARK: Tiffany Stark.

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1 TIFFANY STARK, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN
2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT CONTINUED BY

3 MS. STARK: So two things that came
4 to mind. I just want people to understand that
5 We Energies will say we can't shut off your gas
6 and heat until April 1st, but it's very cold in
7 April. And every year there's been people that
8 have died that were frozen to death; and also,
9 you know, with using ovens and extension cords
10 where there's house fires and people die. So
11 that's important to note.

12 And one other thing is the money
13 that they are giving to these organizations for
14 these nonprofits to look good is our money. It's
15 not their money. Thank you.

16 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. Thank
17 you. It looks like Kyle Giese. Kyle, are you
18 here?

19 Okay. Well, so seeing no other
20 slips, I think we'll --

21 MS. SHUSTER: I think you called my
22 name before.

23 EXAMINER NEWMARK: Oh, yeah. Come up.
24 And who are you?

25 MS. SHUSTER: Dani Shuster.

1 DANI SHUSTER, PUBLIC WITNESS, DULY SWORN

2 DIRECT TESTIMONIAL STATEMENT BY

3 MS. SHUSTER: My name is Dani, and I'm
4 speaking on behalf of myself, but I'm here today
5 because I wanted to share a little bit about my
6 experiences.

7 I work for the state's
8 energy-efficiency program, Focus on Energy, which
9 is overseen by the PSC. I work for Focus on
10 Energy, which is the state's investor-owned
11 utility-funded energy-efficiency program. And
12 I'm here today to urge the PSC not to increase
13 gas and electric rates for the people of
14 Milwaukee, the We Energies customers.

15 What I would really like to share
16 is that I help process the applications for
17 people who are applying for rebates for furnaces,
18 boilers, home insulation, things like that; and
19 the program offers income-qualified -- they call
20 them rebates and incentives, but really, it's
21 ratepayers' money that is decided to be returned
22 to you all in the form of rebates if you get,
23 like, a new energy-efficient furnace or dual heat
24 pump installed in your home.

25 And what I really just want to say

1 is that we get calls every day from people
2 throughout the state. It's funded by 106
3 utilities throughout the state. And I just feel
4 really disgusted, and I was moved today to come
5 here to urge you not to increase gas and electric
6 rates. I'm, like, flabbergasted that this is
7 even a proposal.

8 We get calls every day from people
9 like desperate for help, desperate for help; and
10 then we refer them to, like, WHEAP and these
11 other programs that aren't properly funded.
12 There's nothing for people.

13 This rate increase is going to
14 kill people, like it's actually absurd. I can't
15 believe it's even a proposal. It just really
16 disturbs me that this is something that's even
17 being considered.

18 You know, just as an example, like
19 my first -- I'm relatively new to the position --
20 might not be working there for long, I don't
21 know. But basically, like, we get calls from
22 people saying, like, My furnace is broken, like,
23 I can't breathe, we have no heat in the home; and
24 we, you know, act really empathetic and refer
25 them to other agencies that don't have money.

1 It's really, like, mind boggling
2 that we're doing this performance. And we know
3 that, you know, that these fossil fuel companies
4 could easily fund these projects that they
5 committed to without, like, human sacrifices.
6 It's pretty wild. It's pretty disturbing.

7 And I just have to say, like --
8 you know, I didn't really read from any notes
9 because I'm nervous right now, but I just think
10 that you do have a choice, and you don't actually
11 have to, like -- you don't have to do this. It's
12 pretty scary.

13 By the time, like, 2050 comes
14 around or whatever and it's just like hard to
15 breathe and, like, our beautiful world is just
16 even more degraded, you will have contributed to,
17 like, so much human suffering that doesn't need
18 to happen. So you just shouldn't -- you
19 shouldn't do that, like, just don't raise rates
20 on people.

21 EXAMINER NEWMARK: All right. So
22 that's all the slips I have. Does anyone else
23 wish to make a comment that hasn't spoken yet?
24 Not seeing anybody.

25 So we'll get set to adjourn. I

1 want to thank you everyone for joining us. I
2 want to thank Washington Senior Center for
3 hosting us. We have all your comments, and we'll
4 forward those to the Commission. They'll use
5 them as part of their decision-making process.
6 So trust that they will hear you, and I'm glad we
7 could have you come today.

8 So thanks everyone for
9 participating and coming out. Take care.

10 (The hearing concluded at 7:35 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF WISCONSIN)

2 MILWAUKEE COUNTY)

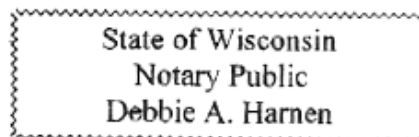
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4 I, DEBBIE A. HARNEN, Registered
5 Professional Reporter, with the firm of Halma
6 Reporting Group, Inc., 342 North Water Street,
7 Milwaukee, Wisconsin, do hereby certify that I
8 reported the foregoing proceedings had on
9 November 3, 2022, and that the same is true and
10 correct in accordance with my original machine
11 shorthand notes taken at said time and place.

12 Debbie A. Harnen

13 Debbie A. Harnen

14 Registered Professional Reporter



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Dated this 6th day of November, 2022.

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